

Commentary

Volume Fifty, Number Three, September 1970

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Letters from Readers

Literary Extremism?

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was interested that Elizabeth Dalton should consider so closely my work, especially my most recent novel, *them*, in your June issue ["Joyce Carol Oates: Violence in the Head"], and that she should point out certain patterns of recurring violence that I had not been aware of. Writers do not choose their subject matters and can neither explain nor defend them—we would all like to write about happy people with happy problems, I suppose.

I don't understand, though, the objection to the use of violence and death. When I began writing, violence in America was not so publicized as it is now, but it certainly existed, as it must always exist, for it is the last and most desperate resource for the energies of life, whether we like it or not. As for death: it is one of the few things we have in common, and an interest in it is not morbid, or unhealthy, but, in my opinion, entirely natural. Death is more common than love, surely? Not only death, but the means by which men attain death—including suicide—seem to me natural, inevitable. Beneath the pleasant surfaces of our ethical and cultural beings there is a primitive substance that might alarm me as a woman but which engages my deepest interests as a writer.

Miss Dalton objects that, in *them*, "there is no identification with [the hero], no deeply felt experience, no real pity or terror." This is surely a matter of opinion, for Jules is a truly living human being, far closer to me than many people I see constantly. His main concerns in the novel, as in his curious life, are for his family and for a woman—bonds of love he cannot escape. Violence and death may be important materials in my writing, but love is my subject.

Though *them* was fantastically imagined, a mock-naturalistic work, I am amazed at the number of letters I am still receiving from people to whom the characters, the setting (Detroit), and the bizarre events are painfully real. Such matters are not "in the head"

but out on the street, and whether they seem real or not must depend, ultimately, on one's own experience. I suppose Miss Dalton's experience has simply not been with this kind of thing. But she should understand that violence in the head or out of it, violence that takes physical expression or is simply a critic's verbal spite, is a reminder to us that reality is a difficult and perhaps terrible thing, but it is, after all, all we have.

JOYCE CAROL OATES
Windsor, Ontario

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to take exception to Elizabeth Dalton's . . . careless and, in fact, unintelligible comments on *Expensive People*. . . . The story is based on the fact that the people who inhabit "affluent suburbia" are evil because they murder their children by ignoring their need for love, by sending them to schools which destroy their creativity, and by dragging them from one pretentious house to another. In the novel, madness passes for sanity and sanity for madness. The names to which Miss Dalton attaches importance contribute little to the thematic definition of the novel itself. The novel reveals a great deal of sophistication on the part of Joyce Carol Oates. If Miss Oates's picture of the vapid, lifeless people who value only money and what it can buy can be characterized as an attempt at, in Miss Dalton's words, "black humor and biting satire," then *The Great Gatsby* and *This Side of Paradise* must also be characterized as attempts at "black humor and biting satire" which also fail. . . .

JANET FLECKMAN
Port Arthur, Texas

MISS DALTON writes:

I don't object to the appearance of violence and death in literature. Nor do I feel that I suffer from a deficiency of violence in my personal experience that would prevent me from commenting on the subject. I do think that some of Miss Oates's work seems to make a claim for an extreme response from the reader simply because the subject is extreme—violent or grotesque. Thus the reader is given the impression that he is being made



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to feel a great deal because he is reading about violence and death, when in fact he is not really feeling very much at all. But I certainly understand that Miss Oates and many of her readers should disagree with me.

In answer to Miss Fleckman—I also have no objection to “black humor” or “biting satire”: they are not terms of opprobrium. I just don't think *Expensive People* does very well what it apparently sets out to do.

The Question of the Palestinians

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Shlomo Avineri's article, “The Palestinians and Israel” [June], is an important first step on the road to a rational discussion of the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism; the concomitant attack on Mrs. Meir and the Israeli “old guard” will no doubt infuriate those American Zionists who are always ready to support the regime in power against “Arab apologists,” “renegades,” etc. Perhaps they will have a bit more difficulty in demonstrating that the chairman of the political science department at the Hebrew University is a “renegade.”

It is clear to me, however, that Professor Avineri's solution will be rejected—if not by Israel, then by the Palestinians—and for good reason, since it negates his own principle of the equivalency of these conflicting nationalisms. Why should the Palestinians accept an “independent state” comprising the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (and possibly the remainder of Jordan)—an artificial creation, poor in natural resources—which would obviously exist at the pleasure of the State of Israel? It makes as much sense to ask the Israelis to move to Jordan, and to give Palestine back to the Palestinians! There is a good deal of old-fashioned paternalism (masquerading as liberalism) in Professor Avineri's suggestion that what the Palestinians really need is their own flag and a seat in the UN—all the trappings of independent state power without the reality. The Arabs are sure to see through this even if the Israelis accept it.

It seems to me that Professor Avineri works himself into this dilemma by maintaining, at one and the same time, that Palestinian nationalism is a legitimate force which must be reckoned with, but that it is *not* as legitimate as Jewish nationalism because it lacks “social content.” This will not wash. Whether or not Arab social-

ism possesses the equivalent of kibbutzim and Histadrut is irrelevant to the Palestinian claim to liberation, just as the question of whether or not Israeli socialism is “white-settler socialism” is irrelevant to the Jews' claim to survival as a national community. In any case, it is surely incorrect to identify Palestinian nationalists with the corrupt Arab governments which they threaten *precisely because* of their commitment to revolutionary socialism.

No—if one is to recognize the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism, one must do so without making invidious and irrelevant distinctions. Although Professor Avineri rejects bi-nationalism as an unjust and unworkable concept, given the desires of Palestinians and Israelis for their own national states, it is nevertheless in this direction that a solution will have to be found. . . .

RICHARD E. RUBENSTEIN

Department of Political Science
Roosevelt University
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Although I welcome Professor Avineri's insights into the true nature of the conflict, there are a few points of fact which need correction or modification. He states: “in the years immediately after 1945, the Jewish *Yishuv* in Palestine was the only force in the Middle East fighting British imperialism. . . .” The fact of the matter is that in the post-World-War-II years there was intense conflict, with active hostilities, between Great Britain and Egypt, especially in the Suez Canal Zone, resulting in England's evacuation. The Suez War in 1956 certainly was a blow to British imperialism in the Middle East. He may also recall that the Anglo-Iraqi treaty signed at Portsmouth, England, in January 1948, was never ratified because of a widespread popular uprising against England in Iraq. Mossadeh's na-

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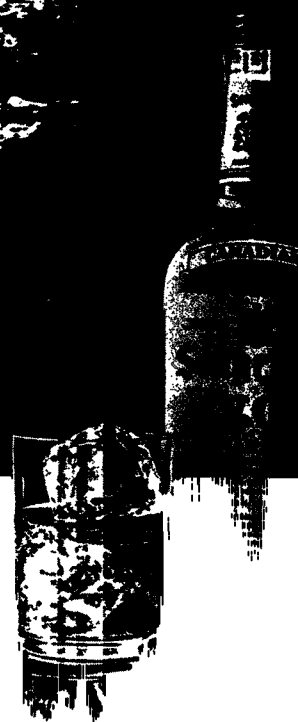
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tionalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company during 1951 also severely undercut British influence in the Middle East.

Professor Avineri's statement that before the establishment of the Jewish nation in Palestine there was "hardly a Jewish proletariat," might well be questioned by a number of European and American labor leaders, especially those in the ILGWU and the Amalgamated.

I question the statement that: "Even among the refugees . . . no socially radical movement . . . has ever emerged." A major struggle within the Palestinian nationalist movement today is between those who emphasize its nationalist aspect and those who have extended the fight against "the socially-entrenched classes" throughout the Arab world.

If Professor Avineri considers Israeli military administration since 1967 "a brilliant improvisation," I suggest that he compare it with allied occupations of Germany and Japan.

True, a federation between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs must be based on "mutual trust," but this would have to be true of any settlement reached through negotiation and accommodation, whether based on federation, binationalism, or acceptance of the UN November 1967 resolution. . . . Without mutual trust there can be only a temporarily-imposed peace backed by the gun. . . .

DON PERETZ

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I agree with Professor Avineri's central theses but I also . . . have a number of criticisms:

1) While Professor Avineri was careful to document the positions of various Israeli political leaders, he did not use the same care in documenting the positions of the Arab political leaders. This is especially true of his statement that the Palestinian National Covenant, as amended by the Fourth Palestinian Council in Cairo in July 1968, limited the rights of Jews to remain in what Arabs call Palestine "only to those Jews who were in Palestine in 1917." . . . Where can one read what was said at the Fourth Palestinian Council in Cairo in July 1968? Who made the statement? Was it a position

paper for Al Fatah or was the paper the product of other Palestinian militant groups, perhaps the PLO, either with or without the active involvement of Al Fatah? Professor Avineri does not say. But the truth of his argument, that we cannot trust Al Fatah's advocacy of a Palestine in which "Moslems, Christians, and Jews will live peacefully side by side," depends on this context.

2) . . . Professor Avineri is careful to distinguish among the positions of Israeli political groups and he also notes differences among Arab states, but he makes no attempt to differentiate among the Palestinian "guerrilla" organizations. Most notably, no distinction is made between the PLO and Al Fatah. . . . Yet in their stated policies and in their political actions these two organizations are as different as Gahal and Mapam.

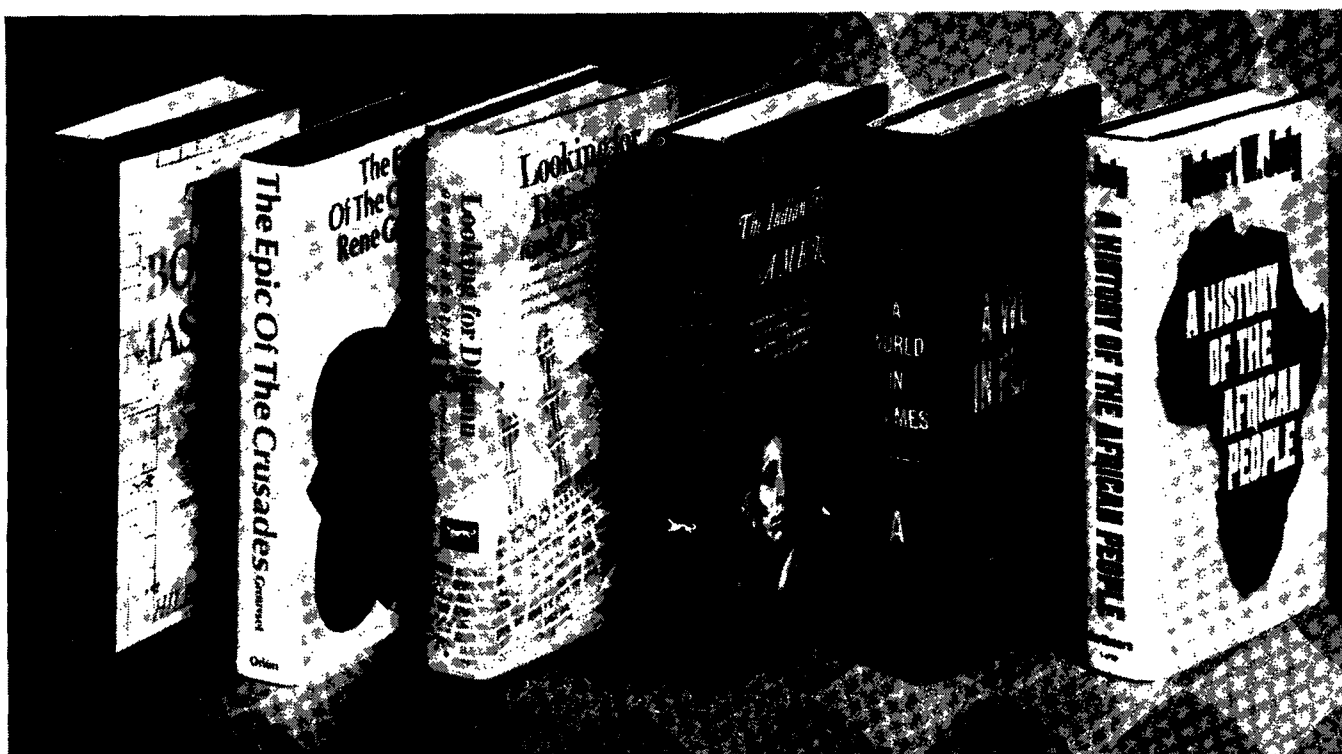
3) Similarly, Professor Avineri fails to make any distinctions among West Bank Arab political leaders. For example, an agreement reached with the mayor of Hebron would not be respected by most West Bank Palestinians, whereas an agreement reached with the mayor of Nablus would be quite a different matter. At least this is the impression I have received from discussions with various Palestinians, particularly in Jerusalem.

4) Finally, I do not agree that the difference in attitude toward the Palestinians in Israel can be characterized as a generational difference. There certainly is a difference between the "old guard," i.e. the "Eastern European Zionists" who have guided the State of Israel since 1948, and those, like Professor Avineri, who are "open-minded about the Palestinians." But my personal experiences and my many conversations with Israelis about the Arab-Israel conflict, both in Israel and in America, do not support Professor Avineri's claim. Whatever differences there are between young and old, immigrant and native-born generations in Israel, this is not one of them. . . .

RABBI NORBERT SAMUELSON
Princeton Hillel Foundation
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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Shlomo Avineri argues that major-power conflict is *not* central to the Arab-Israeli conflict, but the evidence he cites is more historical



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than current. Whatever the roots of the conflict, the presence of major Soviet support for Egypt is central to the problem today. Despite the terrorist attacks, Israel's major threat is from Egypt, a threat made real by Soviet interest. Without big-power support, the Arab threat could easily be contained; with such support, Egypt has the capacity to threaten Israel no matter what accommodations were to be reached with Palestinians.

But even if we reject the notion that major-power conflict is not central, Professor Avineri's prescription makes sense. Pushing for an accommodation between Palestinian and Israeli nationalisms is, first of all, just in its own right. Second, success would relieve much of the constant pressure on Israel, the pressure of terror and bombings. Third, it would begin to undermine the ideological basis for the continued intransigence of Egypt (and Syria) and could thus be a step toward ending the major threat. . . .

DONALD FELDSTEIN

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Israel's 350,000 Arab citizens (about 12 per cent of the total population) provide the strongest argument against bi-nationalism. Since 1948 they have lived in relative peace, but there is little evidence to suggest that these Arabs are well integrated into the predominantly Jewish political culture. As an example, with the exception of Mapam, the only major Israeli political party at one time to advocate bi-nationalism (a position Mapam eventually disowned), Arabs participate in elections only with their own party lists. Even Israel's Communists have divided themselves into Arab and Jewish parties.

One can only agree with Professor Avineri that the Israelis and the Palestinians must recognize each other's permanent cultural and national existence. Only when such recognition is assured can Israel realistically hope for an equitable and secure territorial entity.

MARTIN SLANN

Department of Social Sciences
Clemson University
Clemson, South Carolina

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I have certain reservations in regard to Mr. Avineri's description of Israeli attitudes. It seems to me that he fails to make a clear distinction between two different issues: recognizing the Palestinians as a nation, and supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank. There are many, both individuals and political parties (like Mapam), who explicitly embrace the first idea, but reject the second for what *they* regard as pragmatic reasons. They believe that an Israeli move to create the new entity is likely to raise more problems than it would solve. Not only would such a state occupy only a part of what should be Arab Palestine, but its sovereignty would necessarily be limited by Israel's security considerations. And, on top of that, citizens of a Palestinian state would be denounced as traitors by the whole Arab world, thus becoming alienated both from the other Arab nations, and from the rest of the Palestinians. . . .

MICHAEL LAHAV

University of California
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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I have read any number of books and articles on Israel but have found none to compare with Shlomo Avineri's essay. In my opinion it was brilliant in analysis, eloquent in style, accurate in content, and truly realistic. . . .

RABBI ROBERT E. GOLDBURG

Congregation Mishkan Israel
Hamden, Connecticut

MR. AVINERI writes:

May I first say how encouraged I am by the general tone of the reaction to my article as expressed in these letters. Since I did not attempt to propose a specific program, but to suggest a line of thought which more and more Israeli intellectuals are now beginning to follow, I shall not try to argue all the issues brought up. There are, however, a few points, mainly of fact rather than of opinion, to which I would like to react.

Professor Don Peretz takes me to task for not pointing out that the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine was not the only force in the Middle East fighting the British in the years immediately after 1945. I should probably have been more specific and said "between 1945 and 1948." The conflict between the British

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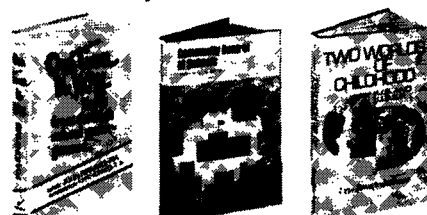
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and the Egyptians in the Suez Canal zone occurred only *after* the Egyptian military revolution of 1952, and, despite the demonstrations and riots in Baghdad, the pro-British regime of Nuri Said managed to stay in power until 1958. During 1945-8, when the Jews in Palestine were fighting the British, there was no force in the Arab Middle East waging anti-imperialist war: in Palestine, the British had to station 100,000 troops to try to put down Jewish resistance, while in the Arab countries, pro-Western governments had virtually no difficulty staying in power. The Arab League, as an instrument of British imperial interests in the Middle East, functioned as smoothly as possible as far as Britain was concerned.

As for the ILGWU, which Professor Peretz cites as an example of the existence of a Jewish proletariat outside of Israel, its present social composition (most of the membership black and Puerto Rican, most of the union bureaucracy, Jewish) seems to corroborate rather than to refute my contention that outside of Israel Jews very quickly tend to move into middle-class positions, irrespective of their initial point of departure.

Rabbi Samuelson queries me about my sources for the resolutions of the Fourth Palestinian Council of July 1968, and the Palestinian National Covenant as amended by that Council. The resolutions of this Council were officially published in Arabic, and though the Palestinian organizations tried their best not to publicize them in the West, an English translation of the Covenant was published by Dr. Yehoshafat Har-kabi in the *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* (Spring 1970). The Covenant, with which Al Fatah concurs, states very explicitly that Arabs and Jews will be treated according to different criteria in the Palestinian state they hope to establish after the destruction of Israel. Article 5 of the Covenant says:

The Palestinians are the Arab citizens who were living permanently in Palestine until 1947, whether they were expelled from there or remained. Whoever is born to a Palestinian Arab father after this date, within Palestine or outside of it, is a Palestinian.

In Article 6, the status of the Jews is defined as follows:

Jews who were living permanently in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion will be considered Palestinians.

On page 51 of the official Arab minutes of the proceedings of the Council, 1917 is given as the date for the "beginning of the Zionist invasion." This means that only those 50,000 Jews who lived in Palestine in 1917 are to be considered "Palestinians": even their descendants are not mentioned. In an interview published in the Beirut newspaper *Al-Anwar* on January 20, 1970, Yassir Arafat similarly referred to the future Palestinian state as an "Arab democratic state." So much for Al Fatah's propaganda about equality for "Moslems, Christians, and Jews." The Palestinian National Charter is the official, political document of the Palestinian movement, and it is no accident that it did not become available in English until published by an Israeli scholar.

As for the Palestinian organizations themselves, Rabbi Samuelson seems to have his facts wrong. True, Al Fatah is not identical with the Palestine Liberation Organiza-

tion, but, since the Six-Day War, it has been affiliated with the PLO and is one of its member organizations. Yassir Arafat is head of both Al Fatah and of the PLO; hence to claim, as Rabbi Samuelson does, that Al Fatah and the PLO "in their stated policies and in their political actions . . . are as different as Gahal and Mapam," is, to say the least, extremely odd.

Rabbi Samuelson seems to prefer the mayor of Nablus to the mayor of Hebron. So do I. The point, however, is that the former, Hamdi Cana'an, was involved in a futile attempt to bring about some kind of mediation between Israel and some of the Palestinian organizations. Cana'an was brusquely rejected and personally insulted by Palestinian guerrilla leaders in Amman, where he went with a message from some Israeli leaders. I hope that one day the details of this mission will become public, and I hope that Rabbi Samuelson will join me in wishing Mayor Ja'abri more luck than Cana'an has had in his sincere and complex attempt which failed because of the maximalist intransigence of Yassir Arafat.

The point I tried to make about the generation gap is simple: the kind of sensitivity to the problem of the Palestinians one finds in people like Dayan, Allon, Hillel, Eliav, etc., cannot be found among the older generation of Israeli leaders of Eastern European background. This seems to me a most encouraging sign, showing that the younger generation is far more capable of reaching some kind of accommodation with the Palestinians than the older generation, whose traditional ideology makes it extremely difficult for them to adjust to the dynamism of the realities surrounding Israel.

Professor Richard Rubenstein seems to be interested in what I am saying, not on its own merits (or lack of them), but as a convenient device with which to hit back at what he considers the standard arguments of the American Jewish Establishment. Well, that is his problem, and I might even sympathize with him in his predicament. But in the course of his argument he appears to misrepresent me on a number of points, and it is on these I would like to take issue with him.

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First, he thinks that I am paternalistic toward the Palestinians, because all I am ready to grant them is the semblance of power without the reality: a flag, a seat at the UN. He should have read my article more carefully. I said explicitly several times that what the Palestinians are looking for, and are entitled to, are "independence, sovereignty, and honor." I also mentioned "self-assertion"; and in the passage from which he seems to be quoting, I said: "a place at the councils of nations, an army, a flag." My mention of an *army* as one of the legitimate requisites of the Palestinians has brought quite a lot of criticism upon me in Israel, but Professor Rubenstein conveniently overlooks it. What I want the Palestinians to have are those real expressions of national self-consciousness that I feel Israel should have, and which I am not ready, as an Israeli, to give up. Or am I now being paternalistic toward the Israelis as well?

From my comparison of the social content of Jewish and Arab nationalism, Professor Rubenstein infers that I think that Palestinian Arab nationalism is somewhat inferior to Jewish nationalism. Rubbish. I can understand why Professor Rubenstein feels uncomfortable in having to compare Israeli kibbutzim with Arab military dictatorships, but I challenge him to show where in my article I made the slightest suggestion that Arab nationalism is in any way inferior to Israeli nationalism. I tried to show how the two different national movements proceeded along different paths in their social development. I also indicated that one national movement ended with what seems to me relative success in the social sphere, while the other is still caught up in deep-rooted historical problems which vitiate much of its attempt at national renaissance. Incidentally, an analysis similar to mine of the lack of social content in Arab revolutionary movements—and one of the most penetrating recent studies of Arab society—was published in Beirut in 1968 by Dr. Sadiq Jalal al-Azm. I may have been wrong in my historical analysis, but I cannot see how an indivious judgment can be read into it.

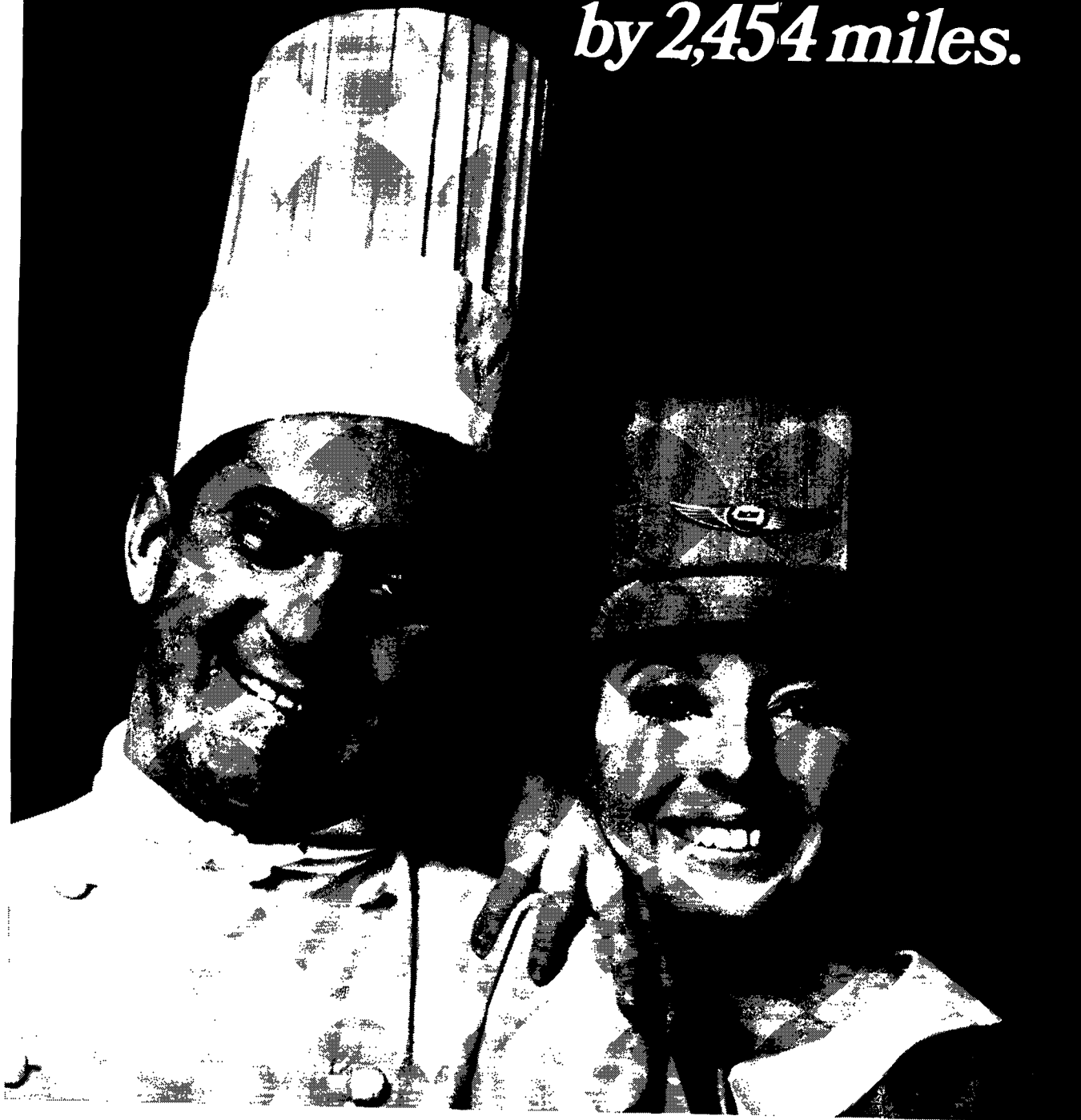
Finally, I suggest that Professor Rubenstein stop speaking about "white settlers" in connection with Israel. Innuendo aside, the fact is that about 50 per cent of Israel's Jewish population comes from

Afro-Asian countries, and belongs, culturally and socio-economically, to the "non-white" world. Yemeni, Iraqi, and Moroccan Jews have been turned by Professor Rubenstein into "white settlers." When these Afro-Asian immigrants establish kibbutzim or join the Histadrut, they are then said to be practicing "white-settler socialism." I sincerely hope Professor Rubenstein's social science is better than that.

Mr. Feldstein raises issues which have become even more pertinent since the recent direct involvement of Soviet military elements in the Arab-Israeli conflict. I have seen my article used by TRB in the *New Republic* of June 27, 1970 as an argument to prove that there is no American interest involved in strengthening Israel vis-à-vis the Arabs (and the Soviets). TRB can be as dishonest as he wishes in his use of partial quotations from my article, but I still think it possible to state that the conflict between the Arabs and Israel is *originally and at its base* a conflict between two national movements and not a Great Power conflict, and yet also to maintain that the Powers have at the moment (as I tried to show they always had) a stake in the conflict. The point is that, unlike in other conflicts, the interest of the Powers in the Middle East conflict is complex and not clearcut, as the presence of a right-wing, pro-Arab lobby in Washington clearly shows. The tragedy of all this is that America, which for almost a decade has been entangled in a war in Southeast Asia against local national-Communist movements, now finds itself at a loss when faced directly with Soviet military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean—precisely the kind of Soviet military involvement which has never been present in Vietnam.

Yet despite the frightening dimensions the conflict has now assumed as a result of Soviet involvement, it still can be de-escalated by an attempt to alleviate the grievance at the root of it—that of the Palestinian Arabs. The recent Soviet peace proposal contains a clause which calls for the Arab governments to suppress guerrilla activities after a settlement, based on the Soviet-Arab interpretation of the Security Council resolution of 1967, is achieved. I will not go into the details of the Soviet proposal itself; on this point it seems as purblind as the hopes of those Israelis who think a settlement can

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be found without taking the Palestinians into consideration. A true settlement can be achieved only if Israel accepts the Palestinians as legitimate partners in a further accommodation, in return for the Palestinians' acceptance of Israel's own legitimacy as a nation.

[Additional correspondence on Mr. Avineri's article will appear in a forthcoming issue.—ED.]

First Example

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The July issue, both overall and in at least one of its parts, exceeded even my usual high expectations. The particular article that excited me was Peter Berlin-rut's "On the Passage of Time." . . . I can't recall ever reading any of his prose before, either in COMMENTARY or elsewhere, and my pleasure in this "first example" is exceeded only by my curiosity and fervent wish to read more of this superb writer's work.

DAVID ALLEN
Baltimore, Maryland

Writers and Revolution

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

At the end of her article, "Literary Revolutionism" [June], Renee Winegarten states that the "present passion for revolution as a means of salvation for society and for the individual requires more precise scrutiny than it has received hitherto." Unfortunately, Miss Winegarten's own essay adds nothing new and certainly nothing precise to our understanding of the passion she purports to deal with. Like all hostile commentators (and Miss Winegarten's tone leaves no doubt as to where her sympathies lie), she falls back on facile generalizations derived from psychology and religion. Writers who advocate revolution or who believe in the possibility of radical social change are, she tells us, either romantic misfits confusing their "frustrated yearning for inner spiritual change with the desire to change the world," or secular prophets in search of an absolute to fill the "area left arid by the decay of religion." We have

heard this kind of explanation (the God that failed, etc.) far too often not to find it tiresome. Miss Winegarten's originality has been simply to extend it, making it apply not only to Communist intellectuals of the 1930's but to anyone, from Byron on, foolish enough to consider the contemporary world less than a desirable place to live in. (Her remark on Régis Debray's book, *Révolution dans la révolution?*, it must be noted, is in extreme bad taste. To imply that Debray was being merely "ingenious" in choosing the title for his book is to dismiss rather lightly the work of a man who has lived according to his words to a far greater degree than any arm-chair moralist. And what, incidentally, shall we say about Miss Winegarten's own title?)

The relationship between literature and revolution in our time is a complex problem that deserves thorough and unbiased examination. Why intellectuals at certain historical moments turn to

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revolutionary politics; why some choose the Left and others the Right (a possibility Miss Winegarten never considers); why and how a revolutionary rhetoric more often than not blinds its practitioners to political realities and why today many brilliant thinkers nevertheless subscribe to such a rhetoric; what impact a writer's ideological commitment has on his work as a creative artist—these are questions that any serious appraisal of “literary revolutionism” must deal with. It is not by adopting, as Miss Winegarten does, a tone of scornful disapproval that we shall get any closer to an understanding of a phenomenon that has gripped men's imagination for two centuries.

SUSAN RUBIN SULEIMAN
Department of French
Columbia University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

... In her article, Renee Winegarten declares, twice, that George Orwell loved cruelty in his secret heart. She says that he was a revolutionary romantic, and she cites a

passage of his which seems to condone murder for the sake of a friend. She also mentions Orwell's later reference to that passage, but omits the fact that Orwell did not repeat the idea of murder for a friend. Miss Winegarten likewise utterly ignores the fact that Orwell insisted on the truth concerning atrocities committed in the name of the revolutions he supported, and that he considered irresponsible all those who dismissed disquieting information concerning cruelties committed by their allies as lies and propaganda.

I do not wish to decry Miss Winegarten's essay: it is written in the best Orwellian tradition, and is thus of great value. This makes it all the more regrettable that she should punish his memory so.

JOSEPH AGASSI
Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

... Modern politics requires three particular assumptions: 1) youth is the repository of morals; 2) the golden age is just around the corner; ... 3) we are living

through an age of unique crisis. ...

The “golden age” motif is not new in fiction or in religion, but it is, I think, new as the dominant motif of politics (by new, I mean post-French Revolution). It is the sense of imminent dissolution and secular redemption which releases political energy today. After all, living from crisis to crisis can hardly be dull. Moreover, democracy as we practice it requires and forges a relationship between a crisis-consciousness and its politics. Simply put, a politician must have a cause in order to promote votes for himself. Since he must fight for his position, he must have something to fight with. Causes stimulate issues and crises; these crises in turn create other crises; and finally what started out as political strategy becomes reality. ...

A good deal of this analysis of the modern politician was stimulated by Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*, which is a more expanded and historical treatment of Renee Winegarten's ideas. ...

ROBERTA KALECHOFSKY
Marblehead, Massachusetts



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18/COMMENTARY SEPTEMBER 1970

MISS WINEGARTEN writes:

One is often astonished by the passion one can arouse. Susan Suleiman over-hastily deduces from my "tone" that I am a rabid reactionary, writing with anti-radical bias. To attribute to me the idea that the great writers who have been attracted by the concept of revolution are "romantic misfits" is a gross distortion. If she will read me dispassionately, she will note that the authors who "sometimes confuse their frustrated yearning for inner spiritual change with the desire to change the world" are specifically surrealists and those of anarchist tinge. Moreover, my contention is that it is perfectly possible to consider the existing world far from ideal without believing that revolution is the sole panacea for all ills. I cannot see how my very mild remark about Régis Debray's pamphlet is in "bad taste" (mild, in relation to a man who has written, "Who will not help to kill the killers?"). Sincerity and the readiness to suffer martyrdom for one's ideals are not, alas, a proof of the rightness

of one's reasoning. But apparently it is of today's revolutionary heroes, rather than of the dead, that nothing but good must be spoken.

Clearly I have written my own essay and not the one Susan Suleiman would have me write: its purpose was to draw attention to a tragic paradox that becomes daily more glaring (and that is not, as far as I know, discussed in Professor Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*). One additional clarification: I do not favor the disparagement of George Orwell which I believe is fashionable in some circles, and I am horrified that Joseph Agassi should imagine I intend disrespect to his memory. That he finds my essay "in the best Orwellian tradition" I regard as the highest compliment. But it seems to me that the second reference to the Italian militiaman still idealizes fierceness along with innocence. Orwell was a complex figure, and it is not by glossing over the complexities that we do justice to him or to the standards for which he strove.

The Lady & the Professors

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I graduated from Cornell University this June . . . and have had ample opportunity to observe the faculty of a university in crisis (during the events of April 1969); and I have also had to think hard about doing further work in the humanities. I therefore read Dorothy Rabinowitz's "The Radicalized Professor: A Portrait" [July] with interest. The article hardly offers an accurate likeness of its subject. It is, if anything, a description of professors in general, and, as such, it seems to be based on two popular, if fallacious, views of the academic. The first is the ancient stereotype of the absent-minded professor: Miss Rabinowitz paints her radical as a gently "out-of-it" individual. . . . The second and more dangerous view is implied in her essay: it is the anti-intellectual attitude of some members of the New Left. For them, and apparently for Miss Rabinowitz, too, all professors are cowardly, repressed, and status-hungry. That is how some of my more hysterical radical friends talked on the Cornell campus last April; but it is clear from Miss Rabinowitz's devastating one-liners ("He may compare the treatment

of the Jews under the Nazis and the treatment of black men in America and record that the treatment of black men in America is infinitely worse than the treatment the Jews suffered at the hands of the Nazis") that she is no friend of radicals. Why then this uneasy alliance? . . .

It seems evident that there are silly and confused people everywhere whose political activity has profoundly subjective and neurotic origins. Movements are not immune to them, and neither are universities. But to characterize the radicalized professor as a bewildered and passionless fumbler is patently absurd. Some professors are better radicals than others. *Obviously*. . . . But the radicals whom I saw last April were men of strength and maturity: Douglas Dowd is but one example. I know of no professors, in fact, whether politically active or not, who conform to Miss Rabinowitz's description. If this is meant to be a composite rather than a likeness based on an individual, the flaws can only be magnified. The portrait is a surprising combination of moth-eaten generalizations and à la mode hostility. I am sorry that the beleaguered pro-

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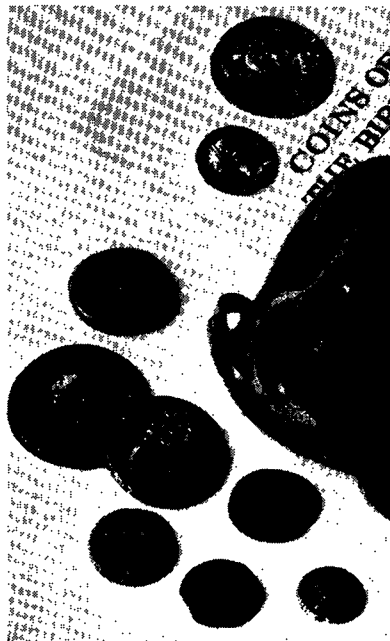
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LEPTON OF CAPONIUS (Widow's Mite) 6-9 C.E.

This Greek bronze coin was probably the "mite" referred to in the New Testament (Luke 21). It was the smallest coin known to and used by the Jews.

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fessors have been attacked from yet another direction.

RITA GOLDBERG
Teaneck, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dorothy Rabinowitz's portrait of an activist faculty member exemplifies a willingness to believe the worst of college professors and an animus against that profession which are characteristic of large sections of Middle America in 1970. Like the suspicions of the suburban voter, her portrait is founded chiefly on ignorance. . . . It contributes nothing to a solution of the institutional conditions and mutual misunderstandings that feed the existing hostility between the University and Middle America. Instead, it serves the prejudiced reader of one side with everything he would like to believe about the other. There is no getting at the roots and removing the causes of this hostility. . . .

JUERGEN SCHULZ

Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

MISS RABINOWITZ writes:

The professor type I had in mind is not, alas, absent-minded nor is he out of it. He is all too frightfully with-it, as Miss Goldberg may discover if she should, after hard thinking, decide to broaden her experience on campus in the humanities, or for that matter, the social sciences or mathematics.

It is not really possible to deal with the merits of an attitude so far from my own as the belief that all professors are cowardly, repressed, and status-hungry, which Miss Goldberg constructs for analogy's sake. I would no more believe that than I would believe that all students of the humanities are perceptive, discriminating, and empowered with the capacity to reason.

As to Douglas Dowd, whose activity has given Miss Goldberg cause to believe that the radicals she met last April were men of strength and maturity: Douglas Dowd is the gentleman who so forthrightly declared himself on violence-prone students (see Walter Goodman, COMMENTARY, August), "God bless them. I will not join them, but God bless them." With such strength and maturity around we are not likely to need any foolishness for a long time to come.

But this is neither here nor there. Perhaps Miss Goldberg should simply be congratulated, in these uncertain times, upon her graduation.

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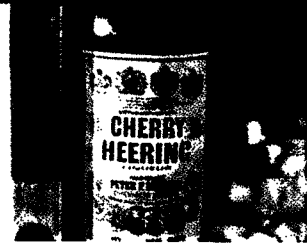
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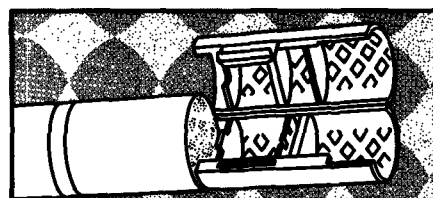
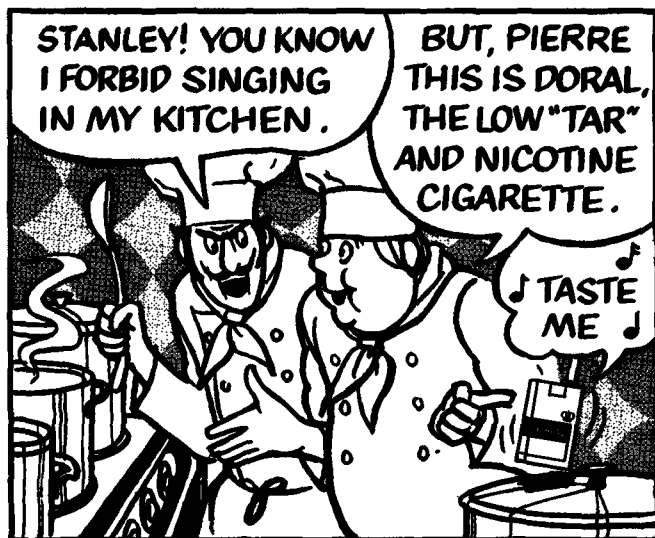
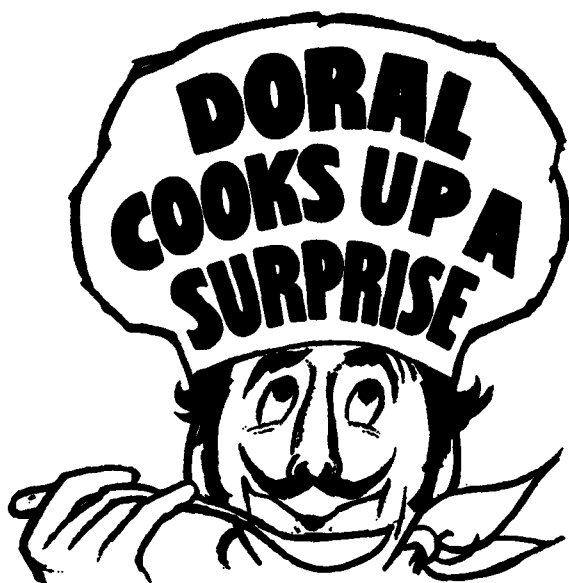


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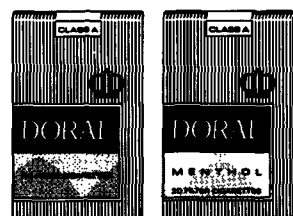
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Revolutionary Suicide

Norman Podhoretz

IN ONE SENSE, as Tom Milstein (p. 35) says and as he impressively demonstrates, the Black Panther party cannot be understood "without reference to the recent history of the Negro movement as a whole." Yet there is also a sense in which it might be said that the story of the Panthers more properly belongs in another context entirely—that of the recent history not of the Negro movement as a whole but of the radical movement as a whole.

The Panthers, to be sure, are an organization of blacks, and it is also true that they are rooted to a certain extent in the traditions of black nationalism (on this point Theodore Draper's "The Fantasy of Black Nationalism" in the September 1969 COMMENTARY* casts considerable light). But the more one ponders the Panthers, the less they look like black nationalists and the more they look like revolutionists of an ecumenically "Marxist-Leninist" stripe. This, indeed, is how they have generally described themselves—though at the moment they seem to be playing down their revolutionism and playing up their service programs in the ghetto in an effort to cultivate the blander image that is necessary to the gathering of widespread liberal support. It may, of course, be that in encouraging what Robert L. Bartley, in a very informative recent piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, calls "the Robin Hood view" of their party, the Panthers are

pointing to a real change of heart and mind. More likely, however, the shift is tactical, dictated by the organizational crisis into which their "off the pig" strategy plunged them even as it was simultaneously establishing their fame and their prestige. Huey P. Newton, at any rate, reminded his followers only a few short months ago that "our one goal is to crush American Capitalism and American Imperialism. Because without this we can do nothing."

Now on the evidence of the long passage Mr. Milstein quotes from one of his essays, Huey P. Newton is clearly capable of critical detachment; and on the evidence implicit in the history of the Black Panther party itself, he is also a very serious man. He must know, then—if even so uncritical and un-serious a revolutionist as Andrew Kopkind does, or at least did when he published an essay on the subject in the *New York Times Magazine* a year or so ago—that the conditions under which a revolution against "American Capitalism and American Imperialism" might successfully be carried out simply do not obtain in America today: there is, as the traditional language puts it, no "revolutionary situation" with which to work. How, under such circumstances, is a serious revolutionist (one, incidentally, who defines his aim as the setting up of a "dictatorship of the people") to proceed? The answer, as diabolical as it is classic, is this: he is to proceed by working not directly for the revolution itself, but rather for the revolutionary situation out of which the revolution itself can plausibly be expected to come.

While decrying repression, he will attempt to provoke it; while warning against "the rising tide of fascism," he will do whatever he can to swell its volume and hasten the pace of its approach.

It is in this sense that the story of the Panthers can be said to fit more smoothly into the context of the radical movement of the 60's than it does into the Negro movement as such. Whatever the many disagreements among them, all the major groups which participated in the great Negro struggles of the 60's—the separatists no less than the integrationists—were united in the desire to make things better in the life of the American black. As revolutionaries operating in the absence of a revolutionary situation, the Panthers have forced themselves into the poignant position of abandoning any such desire: to make things better would be to make things worse by perpetuating the illusion that the American Negro has something to lose.

But there is even more to the case than that, for in working toward the revolution by working to create a revolutionary situation, the only result the Panthers can be reasonably sure of attaining is damage to the people in whose name they presume to speak and death and destruction to themselves. And indeed, Huey P. Newton, with characteristic critical detachment, describes his strategy as the course of "Revolutionary Suicide." ("That's suicide motivated by the desire to change the system, or else die trying.") In pursuing such a course, the Panthers may claim to represent the true interests of the masses of their fellow blacks, but they are actually revealing their spiritual kinship with white groups like the Weathermen and the Yippies to whom suicide is appealing in a way that it cannot be, and could never be, to the masses of American blacks.

* An expanded version of this essay had just been published by Viking under the title *The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism* (211 pp., \$5.95).

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M*A*S*H-22

William S. Pechter

Catch-22 is this year's White Elephant Movie, a lumbering vehicle hauling its tiny cargo of humanist piety from one end of two hours to the other. I forced my way through 150 pages of Joseph Heller's novel when it was published, mainly in the baffled search for what had earned it so many other readers' esteem. In retrospect, I can recognize its importance in inaugurating the "New American Novel," which is to say the advent of the novelist as gag man. The "Catch-22" explanation was a good gag. Most of the others were hustled with the off-the-rack clothiers' pitch of losing money on each item but making it up in volume, which seems to me as mystifying in its application to writing fiction as it did to moving merchandise. What did seem to me interesting about the book was that a work professing so great a devotion to the claims of individual freedom should be so thoroughly a product of what might be called the totalitarian imagination. (Non-) characters bearing such hilarious names as Major Major and Milo Minderbinder are summoned only to be run through the author's paces, used up, and discarded. Most are summoned to serve as objects of ridicule. Others—chiefly Yossarian—are there to be embodiments of the individual's indomitable will to live. In fact, they are embodiments of the author's indomitable will to write.

I would have supposed a film, any film, of *Catch-22* would have

more life in it, however inadvertently, than the novel, if only because of the greater resistance to total domination of the movie medium, and I think it's really rather amazing how close Mike Nichols's film of it has come to proving my supposition wrong. During a tribute to him at the San Francisco Film Festival, Nichols was reported to have named George Stevens as the single greatest influence on him as a filmmaker, a remark I had welcomed as one flung into the face of fashion until realizing, from the perspective of *Catch-22*, that it verges on calumny. What Nichols has taken over from Stevens is that director's worst tendency toward sluggishness and inflation, without any of those qualities of Stevens's work—its cameraman's feeling for solidity and space, not to say its thematic charge—in which its pleasures lie. Indeed, after *Virginia Woolf* and *The Graduate*, sluggishness and inflation might be said to be the Mike Nichols style: some fleeting reminders of *How I Won the War* and a brief tour through the streets of Fellini country in *Catch-22* giving some indication of the style's range of embrace.

BEYOND THIS, it would hardly matter that the director of *Catch-22* has for several years been mounting Neil Simon farces on Broadway if those years hadn't so evidently taken their toll. Not the least of those things I once admired about the comedy of Nichols and Elaine May was the delicate precision of their timing: a timing which could still be discerned beneath the bloated exterior of *The Graduate*, and which constitutes the one thing in that

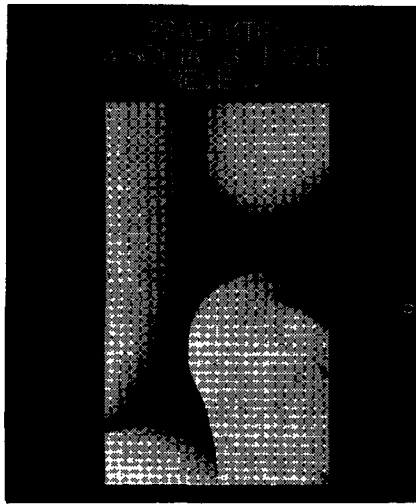
film (apart from the performances of Dustin Hoffman and Anne Bancroft) that might straight-facedly be described as filmmaking skill. In *Catch-22*, things that should take seconds stretch on for minutes, and the minutes of this film can seem like an eternity as it plods on, almost every line seemingly cushioned, Broadway-style, by a little interval to allow it to get its laugh or let its seriousness sink in; seriousness, in this film, consists of a creeping solemnity as effective as the grinding tendentiousness of *How I Won the War* in casting its pall. Occasionally, something will break free from the mechanical Broadway pacing to display a fugitive life: most notably, the film's opening few minutes, a comic turn by Bob Newhart, and the appearances of Anthony Perkins which almost manage miraculously to establish the rhythms of a performance despite the director's deadening hand; given the amount of acting talent involved, it's quite remarkable how rarely such things happen. Orson Welles wages an honorable struggle against what seems to me his bent to act a comic role in this film whose budget could probably have financed not only all of the few movies he has already directed but others he might direct (and probably won't) for years to come. Welles has been quoted as saying that one can learn everything technical one needs to know about directing films in a day and a half. Either Mike Nichols hasn't yet put in his day and a half, or there's something more to it than technique.

AFTER *Catch-22*, carping at *M*A*S*H* is inevitably carping at its critics. The film deserves its immense popularity, and even (given the competition) its Grand Prize at Cannes; it is immensely likable, funny, and free of straining to pretend to be something it isn't. But what is it? From the critics, one might assume an impassioned anti-

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war protest, outrageous black comedy, some sort of "cinematic breakthrough." The army-surgeon heroes crack jokes as they cut into chests and saw off legs, and more than one critic has seen in this levity amidst gore the evidence of the characters' attempt to preserve sanity in an insane world. And, though the film keeps its mouth shut on this score, the case can be made for it, even if the evidence seems circumstantial enough to make one suspect the critics' insight may owe more to a press handout than to the film itself. The preservation-of-sanity idea *might* be valid, if the film had characters; characters, at least, would be the minimum required to support it. But, though Donald Sutherland has a wonderfully mobile, goofy face and Elliott Gould is here to register a much stronger and more mysterious screen presence than in *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*, the film remains as much as that one an animated cartoon, with the cartoon figures played by real people.

Which still needn't be bad, if it weren't for how much was being claimed for it. Like *Bob & Carol*, etc., *M*A*S*H* is not so much allied with the new youth-culture movies as it is in the hip, left wing of commercial entertainment films having a more general appeal. Though the kids can dig it for its scabrous language and relaxation, it seems geared essentially to an audience bred on Committee-style, fast fade-out, revue humor, which means a slightly over-thirties-age, college-educated, professional audience, capable of assuming a mocking attitude to "Establishment" values while to some extent sharing in them. The Committee is, in fact, represented in the cast of *M*A*S*H*, and the film is, like that satirical theater company, essentially a writer (Ring Lardner, Jr.)-actor collaboration; the director's role, in such an enterprise, being mainly to direct traffic, a job which Robert Altman, the director of *M*A*S*H*, does deftly and with self-effacement. If *M*A*S*H* often leaves one feeling, as do Richard Lester films, that things are flying by so thick and fast that one must strain to keep up and even then not take everything in, it is not so much for Lester-style

quick-cutting directional pyrotechnics as it is for the unstressed, occasionally inaudible, overlapping dialogue and the speed at which this is played.

There is, however, the ghost of a director conjured by *M*A*S*H*, and even in shadow form his figure carries more force than the substance which evokes it. Though it may owe only to the hallucination of an imagination overbred by movies that the sight of the army chaplain blessing a jeep calls to my mind Simon of the desert distractedly blessing a lost tooth, I think there can be no doubt that the "Last Supper" given the suicide-bent dentist in *M*A*S*H* inevitably recalls not Leonardo but that previous movie memento of him in Bunuel's *Viridiana*. But the Bunuel, in both instances, is not only far funnier than the echoes of it in *M*A*S*H*; it is also genuinely and disturbingly blasphemous. Though the chaplain in *M*A*S*H* is the object of good-natured ridicule throughout, the irreverence is strictly varsity-show variety; despite the film's slightly self-conscious show of having something to offend everybody, all is undercut by its desire to please: it is naughty, but nice. And, of course, since everyone really does like racy language, sexy jokes, enlisted men's (in this case, junior officers') deflation of military brass, and gentle pokes at the clergy, *M*A*S*H*'s offensiveness is really a safe bet. When Bunuel gets this innocuous, even he will get an indulgent parent's pat on the head, as witness Stanley Kauffmann's commendation of *The Milky Way*.

Which is still to speak less of the film than of its reception. I think, black comedy and anti-war protests aside, that *M*A*S*H* is best seen as a genre film with certain of its formulaic elements slightly askew, and Pauline Kael is, as usual, right when she describes it as a service comedy. (Though it might also be seen as a war film, with the operating room substituting for the battlefield; certainly films such as *Battle Cry* have demonstrated how few actual combat scenes a war film need contain.) Placed in the line of service comedy (and the film tapers off into a more conventional instance

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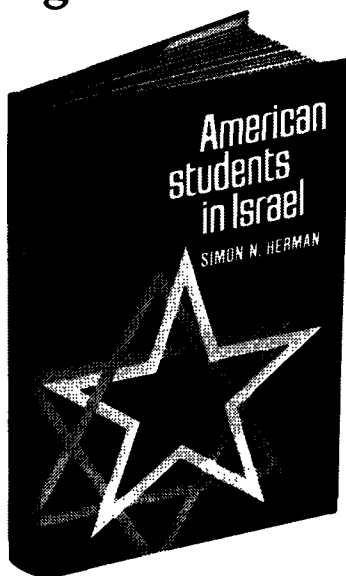
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by **SIMON N. HERMAN**

Associate Professor of Psychology
and Contemporary Jewry,
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of this genre as it progresses), *M*A*S*H*'s chief anomaly is its bloodshed, whose function seems to be mainly to create the illusion of a greater contact with reality than the bloodless antics of the film will themselves sustain, and, conversely, to sell the audience on this notion by extracting the price of its occasional discomfort; the actual "offensiveness" of these sequences is of the sort (subspecies, "sick humor") described above, and the details sufficiently restrained so that I, as at least one member of the audience with a fair tendency toward squeamishness, could find them less unpleasant than the sight of some oozing chipped beef on toast.

SERVICE COMEDY turns essentially on the fantasy of beating the system, and it is here that *M*A*S*H* really comes into its own. From the very first, the surgeon heroes set about putting their superior officers in their places, unstuffing shirts, turning up dry martinis and moist nurses, and generally running the show; and never before has it all looked so easy. Usually, as in *Operation Mad Ball*, an amusing if also overrated example of this generally impoverished genre, one is kept aware that one is knocked down nine times for every tenth time that one triumphs. There is, that is to say, the presumption of some reality principle against which the fantasy takes on its meaning and its satisfactions, a reality principle whose absence in *M*A*S*H* cannot be adequately explained away by the fact that its heroes are officers and doctors; even officers and doctors don't *begin* by calling their commanding officer "Henry." But the fantasy of service comedy masks a fantasy of another kind in *M*A*S*H*, the fantasy of professional expertise as moral armor. This is seen most nakedly in the self-congratulatory sequence of the golfing expedition (as comedy, the flattest episode of the film), in which the heroes' medical prowess enables them to lord it over a virtual microcosm of the military establishment with impunity, but is already latent in the "Haven't I seen you somewhere before, stranger?" introduction of the two doctor heroes to one

another toward the film's beginning. This fantasy—a translation of "the fastest gun in the West" into "the fastest knife in the East"—of the doctors' skills as both empowering them to beat the system and providing them with immunity from the system's values is fundamentally a devious rationale for "simply doing one's job." And, of course, since the job of these men is saving lives rather than taking them, they are acceptable to their audience as heroes in a way that soldiers wouldn't be. Yet, ultimately, their job is the army's, and their saving of lives an activity which makes that of taking lives run more smoothly; and, as medical resisters to Vietnam participation have shown, doing one's job may not be the only alternative.

Of course, *M*A*S*H* is set in Korea, not Vietnam, which may make such issues irrelevant, yet one hardly needs Stanley Kauffmann and the other critics to point out that *M*A*S*H*'s Korea is Vietnam, in a way that redounds to the film's credit for boldness without touching on any of the unpleasant questions that an actual setting in Vietnam might raise. *M*A*S*H* is punctuated periodically by fatuous announcements, over the company's public-address system, of the showing of various guts-and-glory war movies, and ends, self-mockingly, with the announcement that "tonight's movie has been *M*A*S*H*." No doubt, there will be people in the film quarterlies to cite this as a stroke of Brechtian alienation; I think, rather, it is an admission that, for all the film's pointed ridicule, *M*A*S*H* ends up—with its fun and games, pretty nurses and easy sex, and final sentimentality in depicting one of the doctors reluctant to accept his discharge papers—as a species of what it is mocking. And though the closing send-up may argue further for the film's unpretentiousness, I think at this point unpretentiousness has become indistinguishable from equivocation. Artistically achieved fantasy can help put one in closer contact with reality. One leaves the theater at the end of *M*A*S*H* lulled by assurances that, with one's professional skills as protection, beating the system is laugh-

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ably easy; and, insofar as I thus left the theater at the end of *M*A*S*H* even less in touch with reality than I was when I went in, I think the film, for all its affability, charm, and real accomplishment, is to be resented.

Getting Straight is your basic, all-purpose student revolt movie, or will do while one tries to avoid *The Strawberry Statement*. Elliott Gould is in this one also, and his performance, though intermittently impressive, suggests, as does that of

Donald Sutherland in *Start the Revolution Without Me*, that *M*A*S*H* may have a stronger director in Robert Altman than it sometimes appears. In fact, compared with *Getting Straight*, *M*A*S*H* is everything they say it is. Awash in its soft-rock score warbled by the usual chorus of eunuchs, *Getting Straight* offers a view of college life whose reality is continuous with that of *Good News* and *Horse Feathers*, with the exceptions that it cannot approach the latter in its invocation of anarchy, and, though Elliott Gould is allowed to throw several tantrums before, not until nearly the film's close does he get to jump up on a table and hurl sheaves of scholarly notes in the air. It's like nothing so much as a two-hour version of that campus-confrontation Bufferin commercial "for sensitive people," except that this one actually does give you the headache.

THOUGH *Getting Straight* will probably make money, I doubt that anyone will be fooled by it other than a few sincere and well-meaning adults desperately trying to "bridge the generation gap" and understand what's going down. One might almost suspect a plague-on-all-your-houses cunning in the way the film reduces all stances on its issues to a species of stupidity, if there were any consistency in this, or if the film showed any other traces of intelligent life. The film does end in a way consistent with its character: hero and heroine, having found their way into each other's arms across the tumult of a campus riot, make love amidst the rampant chaos and destruction. Again, this verges so close on trenchant comment as to suggest that it might all be a salutary instance of our ability to laugh in the midst of our misery, but it isn't. Like *M*A*S*H*, *Getting Straight* is anodyne humor, national calamity played as farce, short-term therapy in Learning to Live With It. But, while *M*A*S*H* is fast-acting and good for two-hours' relief, *Getting Straight* isn't able, even for a minute, to kill the pain.

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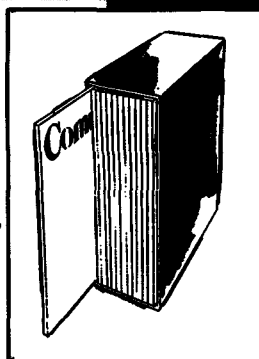
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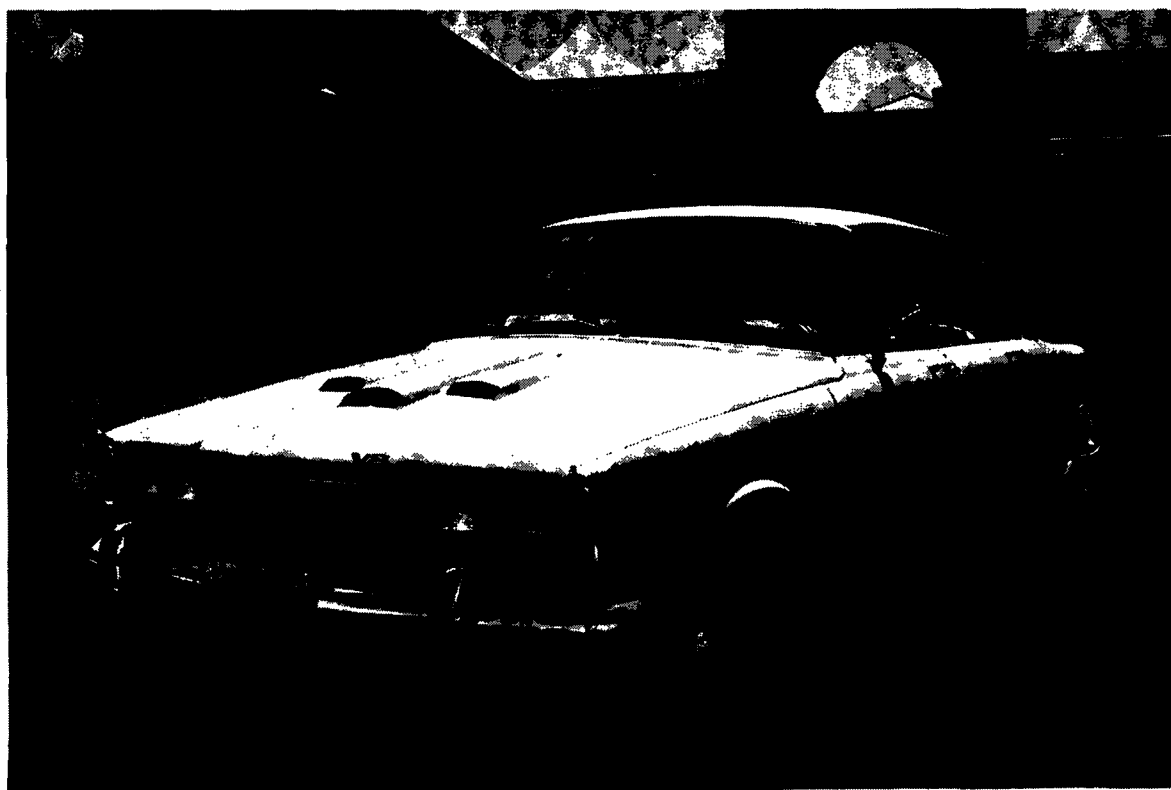
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A Perspective on the Panthers

Tom Milstein

THE WORLD of the Black Panther party might have been constructed by Kurt Vonnegut out of bits and pieces of Dostoevsky. It is a world of double and triple agents, radical rhetoric and reactionary consequences, mindless violence and breakfast-for-children programs, cop killers and killer cops, penny-ante stickups and Park Avenue fund-raising soirées, chiliastic impulse and unforgiving discipline. That the Panthers are a world unto themselves is easily confirmed by a reading of their weekly paper, the *Black Panther*, with its crude cartoons depicting pigs in police uniforms being shot to pieces, its ominous purge lists complete with the name and photograph of each victim and an account of his heresy, and the inevitable pages of thunderously dull quotation from Kim Il Sung or some other "Third World leader." Yet the circulation of that unreal journal exceeds a hundred thousand, and if it is true that its readership is composed mainly of white New Leftists, it is also true that among Negro youth, both on the campus and in the streets, the Panther mystique is pervasive and highly influential.

The rapid rise to prominence of a group as exotic as the Black Panther party poses a formidable challenge to analysis—a challenge that is not lessened by the not unlikely possibility that the party will lose its current fight for survival. From an organizational standpoint, the Black Panther party today hardly exists. Its ranks have been depleted by a wave of internal purges and a ban on new recruitment by the national headquarters; the party's leadership has been decimated by lethal confrontations with the police and rival nationalist groups and by legal prosecutions against the survivors. Nevertheless, the fame and prestige of the Black Panther party have never been greater. Competing groups of militants and nationalists grudgingly acknowledge the "vanguard" role which the Panthers play in the struggle for "black liberation." New Left leaders see in the Panthers an opportunity to re-program their own faltering movement by concentrating

on the issue of race rather than on foreign policy. New Left young people in general idolize the Panthers because they embody every adolescent stereotype of the revolutionary. And, as Tom Wolfe has so wittily discovered, the beautiful people have found them to be perfect partners in the current game of "radical chic."*

At the other end of the spectrum, the right wing has also discovered the Panthers. For a couple of years now, California's Ronald Reagan has been able to raise his Gallup ratings five or ten points by publicly attacking the Panthers every few months, and Attorney General Mitchell has done his best to cooperate on a national level. The pattern is depressingly familiar: the right wing's hysterical attacks have the effect of legitimating the most undemocratic, unrepresentative, and extreme elements of the Left; these elements return the favor by engaging in the kinds of violent rhetoric and actions that are guaranteed to frighten solid majorities of Americans into the conservative camp.†

WHAT IS the Black Panther party? It is a totalitarian organization of black nationalists which identifies with

*See Wolfe's article in *New York* magazine, June 8, 1970.

† There is an eerie parallel between the views of Eldridge Cleaver, the Panthers' most famous spokesman, and those of Kevin Phillips, until recently special assistant to Attorney General Mitchell, and author of *The Emerging Republican Majority*. Both are obsessed with the factors of ethnicity and extremism in American political life, and each has developed a strategy for exploiting these factors in a way which almost requires the services of the other. Cleaver, in an article entitled, with characteristic subtlety, "Racist Ethnic Groups Battle for Pig Power" (*Black Panther*, Nov. 16, 1968), has argued that America is a potential inferno of ethnic animosities in which black extremism can serve as the "disreputable element that supplies the pressure, that supplies the chaos, that supplies the friction"—either to destroy "bourgeois democracy" and produce a right-wing dictatorship (a development to be welcomed since it lays the ground for "the revolution"), or to coerce concessions from "those who want law and order . . . so that they can continue the functioning of their machine." Phillips, less apocalyptically, predicates Republican electoral dominance until the year 2004 in large part on friction within the traditional Democratic coalition between black extremists, patronized by the Yankee elite (which he believes is moving out of the GOP and preparing to take over the Democratic party), and the ethnic lower-middle and working classes, who will be spurred by backlash sentiment into the Republican party.

TOM MILSTEIN, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is a junior fellow at Columbia University's Research Institute on Communist Affairs. Mr. Milstein, who is currently on leave from the staff of the League for Industrial Democracy, is a member of the national executive committee of the Young People's Socialist League.

branches of world Communism. Its base is the Negro lumpenproletariat but it is intimately allied with the collegiate New Left. It is anti-Semitic, sometimes openly, sometimes by implication and innuendo.* It is highly theatrical and publicity-minded, but it means business and is after power. It is a racket, but also much more than a racket.

The Panthers are organized along strict paramilitary lines. Power in the organization is concentrated wholly at the top. The party has never held an election of its officers, never held a convention, and never debated basic policy. Individual members have no rights with respect to the party bosses. They are liable to summary purge, with no right of appeal, for any reason deemed appropriate. No internal factions, or even differing points of view, are tolerated. The only form of criticism permitted is self-criticism; that is to say, the leadership has the right to criticize the rank and file, and the rank and file has the right to criticize itself.† Panther leaders have been frank to explicate their basic political values. In his book, *Seize the Time*,** Bobby Seale invokes the age-old comparison of the righteous party and the state it creates with an organic entity in which the leadership corresponds to the "brain" and the membership to the lesser organs. Justice and democracy then consist of the smooth and efficient carrying out of the orders of the head by the hands, feet, and so forth. It is clearly "unnatural" for hands and feet to usurp the brain's function; accordingly, the duty of those not in leadership is absolute obedience.

BUT IF the fundamental structure of the party is unoriginally totalitarian, in other respects the Panthers are a very distinctive group. Although the party itself is only about four years old, neither its character nor its development can be understood without reference to the recent history of the Negro movement as a whole, and more specifically to the failure of the civil-rights movement to make a successful transition from the South to the North.

Throughout the 50's and early 60's, the Negro movement consisted mainly of the struggle to extend constitutional principles, which already prevailed in every other section of the nation, to an island of backwardness: the American South. This struggle resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 which, together with the accumulated decisions of the federal courts, placed segregation outside the pale of legality. It was a brilliant victory but it also posed a new and more difficult challenge to the movement. Bayard Rustin summed up the nature of this new challenge in the phrase "From Protest to Politics," the title he gave to a landmark article in the February 1965 COMMENTARY. After reciting the now familiar litany of statistics documenting Negro poverty in the U.S., Rustin said:

These are the facts of life which generate frustration in the Negro community and challenge the civil-rights movement. At issue, after all, is not *civil rights*, strictly speaking, but social and economic conditions. Last summer's riots were not race riots; they were outbursts of class aggression in a society where class and color definitions are converging disastrously. How can the (perhaps misnamed) civil-rights movement deal with this problem?

Rustin noted that the beginnings of an answer to his question were visible in the evolution of "the civil-rights movement . . . from a protest movement into a full-fledged *social movement*. . . . It is now concerned not merely with removing the barriers to full *opportunity* but with achieving the fact of *equality*." Such a movement had to adopt a new program, stressing full employment, abolition of slums, and massive investments in education. And it had to adopt a new strategy to implement this program—a strategy based not on the protest tactics of the civil-rights phase (which had been effective precisely because the demand for equal opportunity did not challenge existing economic relationships) but on a political thrust aimed at forging alliances with labor, the other ethnic minorities, and liberals within the Democratic party. The approach Rustin advocated—"coalition politics"—envisioned a realignment of the major parties, with the Negro movement playing a catalytic role. The American people were to be given a clear choice between a Democratic party bound to a liberal program emphasizing full employment through public works and job training, national economic planning, federal aid to education, attractive public housing—"all this on a sufficiently massive scale to make a difference"—and a Republican party of "refugee racists and economic conservatives." Rustin, with the evidence of the 1964 Presidential election behind him, had few doubts about how the American people would respond if given

* The Panthers admit to being anti-Zionist but insist that this is not a form of anti-Semitism. The terms of the disclaimer are rarely convincing. Here, for example, is how a recent article in the *Black Panther* dealt with the charge of anti-Semitism: "This is a bald-face lie. It must be pointed out that the Black Panther Party is not anti-Semitic. In fact, we are in total support of Palestine's righteous struggle against Zionist imperialism, that works hand in glove with U.S. imperialism. We must remember that the Arab people are Semitic people also and the only right that the Zionist clique, headed by Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan, have to the land that they call Israel is a robber's right. We are anti-Zionist expansion in the Arab world and Zionist exploitation here in Babylon, manifested in the robber barons that exploit us in the garment industry and the bandit merchants and greedy slumlords that operate in our communities" (May 19, 1970).

† For a description of the "rights" of the Panther rank and file, see "What Is Ultra-Democracy?," an article by Don Cox, field marshal of the Black Panther party, in the *Black Panther*, February 2, 1969.

** Random House, 429 pp., \$6.95.

this kind of choice between clear-cut alternatives.

It was not to be. A variety of issues, which Rustin had no way of anticipating, arose whose effect was to divide rather than to consolidate the coalition he expected to take over the Democratic party. Chief among these divisive issues, of course, was the war in Vietnam. But even before the war escalated, there were clear indications that the civil-rights movement itself was going to face grave difficulties in making the transition "from protest to politics." Beginning in those sections of the civil-rights movement which were at the militant forefront of the Southern struggle—SNCC and CORE—there arose a rebellion against the coalition strategy urged by Rustin, a rebellion most pungently articulated by Stokely Carmichael, whose demand for "black power" seized the imagination of thousands of Negro middle-class youth across the country. Soon the black-power slogan had deepened into a more comprehensive ideology of black nationalism, exclusivity, and separatism. Almost overnight, SNCC and CORE, which had formerly measured "militancy" by the degree of commitment to integrationist ideals, reversed themselves and now equated militancy with fervid denunciations of liberals, honkies, middle-class Jews, and white America.

To a considerable degree, the new nationalist impetus came from exactly where the black-power advocates said it did: the need for an assertion of black independence and pride after centuries of racial oppression. Other influences, like the liberating effect on American Negroes of sovereign, self-determining African nations, played their role as, in a different way, the summer ghetto riots also did. But whatever may have caused it, the turn from civil rights to black nationalism effectively torpedoed efforts by Rustin and others to help move the Negro movement beyond the emphasis on formal legal equality to overt political action for social and economic equality.

TODAY, when we are accustomed to finding black nationalism in open or tacit coalition with the most fantastic array of white groups, it is well to bear in mind that "black power" began its career as a "radical"—even "revolutionary"—critique of the very idea that blacks could profitably ally with anyone but themselves. Rustin's projection of economic equality as the next stage of the Negro struggle was based on his perception that after the passage of the civil-rights acts, the great question for black Americans would be, "If we're so free, how come we're so poor?" His answer to that question entailed the formulation of a new strategy for the Negro movement, aimed at energizing a majority coalition of Americans around economic issues—jobs, schools, housing, and the like—to make equality not merely a legal condition but a social fact.

In this context, the "radical" rhetoric of "black power," with its fierce attacks on integrationists, labor unions, liberals, white ethnic minorities, and democratic socialists, its effort to substitute questions of identity and pride for a unifying economic program, and its divisive obsession with violence, played directly into the hands of those with the most to lose from economic change—to be blunt, the conservative rich. Black nationalism thus provided a "left-wing" ultra-militant cover for a major retreat by what had been leading sections of the Negro movement from the fight for economic equality. Like most counter-revolutions, it was germinated within the ranks of the popular movement itself—indeed, among its militants.

Paul Feldman, in a prophetic article ("The Pathos of 'Black Power,'" *Dissent*, January-February 1967), sensed the essentially conservative implications of the black-power movement almost before business itself did:

In a number of its implications, "Black Power" is a conservative position. I say this not merely, or even primarily, because William Buckley expressed agreement with Floyd McKissick's defense of "Black Power" on TV. Nor merely because the right-wing Free Society Association, headed by Barry Goldwater, announced that "Black Power could become a constructive political force under responsible leadership," since "it has at least the virtue of calling upon the Negro to think and do for himself." No; "Black Power" is conservative because it signifies a turning inward of the Negro revolution, a form of economic separatism which, under the best of circumstances, would leave the ghetto intact and still at the mercy of overwhelming social forces.

The affinities between business conservatism and black nationalism are both programmatic and organizational. They reveal themselves most blatantly in the "black capitalism" boondoggle currently being perpetrated by CORE and the Nixon administration; but the thrust of the alliance—for such it became—was plain even before it "went public," specifically in the general indifference of black nationalists to the economic plight of the Negro masses—or rather, in their redefinition of the problem as "white racism" rather than poverty (which after all affects many more whites than blacks) and economic exploitation (which affects a majority of Americans and degrades them all). "Going it alone" became the proud watchword of the nationalists; slogans like "black power," "black is beautiful," and "burn baby burn" were meant to dissolve Negro self-hate and instill the self-confidence which was necessary for blacks to pull themselves up by their "bootstraps." This of course was but a black version of what the economic elite has always preached to the poor. Once one accepts the logic of this approach, social programs aimed at collec-

tive upward mobility through full employment, quality public education, better housing, and so on, take on the appearance of bureaucratic doles, patronizing handouts, and insidious efforts to undermine individual moral character.

The conservative attitudes I have been describing have had their traditional home among those business forces which have opposed the trade-union movement, the New Deal, major spending in the public sector, efforts at a more equalitarian redistribution of national wealth, and democratic planning for social priorities. They originate, obviously, in the business community's stake in an economic order which perpetuates its wealth and power. How what amounts to a free-enterprise ideology found its way into the "militant" wing of the Negro movement and was thereby miraculously transformed into "radicalism" must surely rank as one of the great hoaxes of 20th-century American politics.

THE FIRST indication of a receptivity to the idea of black power in circles which had not previously been notable for their sympathy with anything radical was the deluge of daily TV coverage suddenly awarded to the incendiary rhetoric of Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and other leaders of organizations which even then had dwindled to no more than a few hundred—in some cases, a few dozen—members. Similarly, businessmen who a few months earlier had been nodding their heads in agreement with a New York Times editorial which criticized the first New York school boycott on the grounds that its demands, though perhaps just, required unrealistically expensive reforms and would therefore only "alienate white people," did an about-face and began patronizing whole organizations of professional alienators of white people. Thus the first major national conference of black nationalists, held in Newark in the summer of 1967, was funded by a group of "concerned" national corporations headed by American Telephone and Telegraph (this was the conference which produced the 13-point definition of Black Power, one of whose more infamous items referred to the "Imperialist Zionist war" in the Middle East, while disclaiming any implication of anti-Semitism). At the same time, flocks of black "militants" were being signed on to lucrative positions as "consultants" to the billion-dollar foundations.

There is no need to imagine a manipulative conspiracy to derail the civil-rights movement. The point is that a powerful affinity existed from the beginning between the black nationalists and the business Establishment, and each side did its share in translating that affinity into an alliance. Business—reeling from the massive defeat inflicted upon its party in the 1964 elections, increasingly apprehensive about the nearly unanimous support being given by Negroes to the Democrats, and fearful of the possibility that the

Negro movement, in making the transition from civil rights to social and economic equality, might spark a full-scale realignment of the party structure, with all the grave consequences for the economic status quo which *that* development would entail—was definitely in the market for a strategy to defuse the Negro revolution. The "militants"—increasingly frustrated with the failure of their direct-action tactics to affect social and economic realities, and not so enamored of the type of change which might interfere with their own middle-class aspirations anyway—wanted desperately to get themselves acknowledged as the legitimate representatives and spokesmen of the Negro people as a whole. The militants provided business with a radical-sounding cover for its conservative influence; business provided the militants with glamor and money. It was one of those fascinating alliances into which the parties stumble, half unconsciously and half by design, and which are the stuff of major turning points in politics.

This particular alliance between big business and middle-class Negroes found its quintessential expression in the demand for "community control" of various ghetto institutions. Feldman, in talking about Stokely Carmichael's demand for black control of the ghetto, dismissed the idea as "black utopian socialism." He of course had no way of anticipating that business would rush in to subsidize the nationalists, together with their program, as a means of setting the ghetto community, the ethnic minorities, and the labor movement at each other's throats. Yet that is exactly what happened in New York City in the terrible fight over the schools.*

A final aspect of black nationalism that deserves comment is the little psychodrama of threat and capitulation that passes for "confrontation" between "irreconcilable militants" armed with "non-negotiable" demands, and "terrorized" Establishments which always seem to be accommodating the extremists in order to ward off that ever-threatening race war lurking in the wings. Close observation usually reveals that the irreconcilable militants rarely demand anything which might produce tangible gains for the people of the ghetto—things like more jobs, better housing, or more schools and teachers. Usually they demand things which will produce tangible gains for the irreconcilable militants—things like administrative control of the school system, with its extensive patronage opportunities, or autonomous black studies programs, or "reparations" for 400 years of Negro suffering which have a tendency to disappear into the pockets of the recipients. As to the terrorized Establishments, they have a decided inclination to sacrifice other people's rights and funds rather than their own; thus, to "keep Harlem cool," New York's Mayor

* See Maurice J. Goldbloom's article in the January 1969 COMMENTARY.

is willing to concede the jobs of union teachers, while to "save the university" a president will liquidate the faculty's academic freedom.

The threat-capitulation psychodrama is important to the maintenance of black nationalism for several reasons. It disguises the paternalistic relationship between the conservative business Establishment and the black nationalists by maintaining the fiction that the militants have forced the Establishment to make concessions that it would not otherwise make. It heightens the prestige of the militants and their nationalist ideology within the Negro community: "Say what you will, they get results." And it legitimizes threat, intimidation, and violence as political tactics—rarely employed, to be sure, against the hand that feeds, but quite useful in disciplining dissenters from the nationalist orthodoxy and as shock weapons against political enemies in the white community.

ONCE UNLEASHED, reactionary forces, like their revolutionary counterparts, tend to pyramid on one another, often in ways unintended by their original authors. In providing financial and moral support for the rise of black nationalism, the business Establishment played a vital role in the subversion of the Negro movement and helped set the stage for the next major development:

So Huey suggested to the central group that we bring these brothers off the block, openly armed, on to the campus and bring the press down. We could reach the community (because the press would be hungry for it) and show them, on Malcolm X's birthday, May 19, that Malcolm X had advocated armed self-defense against the racist power structure and show the racist white-power structure that we intend to use the guns to defend our people. All these cultural nationalists, these underground RAM bastards, all of them, were scared and rejected it. . . . The only people hanging on to it were Huey P. Newton leading it and me—following Huey P. Newton because I dug my brother Huey, because I felt I knew what the hell he was talking about, because at this time, he was explaining to me that you implement through practice, not just through a bunch of words, what Fanon was talking about. . . .

This is when we really, really, began to pick our bone with these cultural nationalist cats. . . . They accused us of stealing money, and then rejected this idea about the guns and arming the people. They started accusing us, and they were trying to act bad on the campus like they were bad dudes off the block. You get these cultural nationalists that think they're bad, think they're badder than anybody else. So Huey says, "If they think they're bad, we're going to get our shit" (*Seize the Time*, Bobby Seale, pp. 30-31).

It was frustration with the endless "jiveass bickering," the violent posturing, and the pseudo-

revolutionary plotting of middle-class black nationalism that finally drove Huey P. Newton, acknowledged "genius" of the Black Panther party, off the campus of Merritt Junior College and onto the streets of Oakland, California. It was a tremendous leap, one that wrenched black nationalism free of its umbilical connection with the white bourgeoisie and the Negro middle class. By recasting black nationalist ideology on flexibly racist, rather than racist, grounds, the Black Panthers preserved the dynamism of black nationalism while breaking through its parochialism. By freeing black nationalism of the Negro middle class, they transformed it into a mobilizing ideology of the black lumpenproletariat. Huey P. Newton's accomplishment required the most reckless courage and a superb intelligence, as well as the most appalling amorality and cynicism.

The lumpenproletariat is the concentrated refuse of society. Economists and ideologues may wonder why an affluent country like America should tolerate unemployment on the level necessary for such a class to accumulate, but there can be little serious dispute about its social character. Occupying an underworld in which necessities are scarce and amenities absent, the lumpenproletariat acquires every conceivable corruption and vice. Atomization, the precondition for the rise of a totalitarian movement in society at large, is the permanent condition of life within the lumpenproletariat, where each individual must struggle to survive and to escape at every other individual's expense. In such a situation, the simplest and most basic social bonds dissolve. Trust and loyalty—even among friends and family—are impossible luxuries, and, in the psychopathic transvaluation wrought by lumpenproletarian realities, come to be looked upon as manipulative devices. The characteristic mentality corresponding to this mode of life is the "hustle"; the characteristic group, the juvenile gang. The glamorized route out of the lumpenproletariat is the kind of anti-social behavior that typically consists of either the most primitive exploitation of other members of the class, or predatory attacks on the society which excludes: the pimp or the thug.

Huey P. Newton knows all this and accepts it. In a poignant essay entitled "Fear And Doubt," he writes:

The lower socio-economic Black male is a man of confusion. He faces a hostile environment and is not sure that it is not his own sins that have attracted the hostilities of society. . . . As a man, he finds himself void of those things that bring respect and a feeling of worthiness. . . .

It is a two-headed monster that haunts this man. First, his attitude is that he lacks innate ability to cope with the socio-economic problems confronting him, and second, he tells himself that he has the ability but he simply has not felt strongly enough to try to acquire the skills

needed to manipulate his environment. In a desperate effort to *assume* self-respect, he rationalizes that he is lethargic: in this way, he denies a possible lack of innate ability. If he openly attempts to discover his abilities, he and others may see him for what he is—or is not, and this is the real fear. He then withdraws into the world of the invisible, but not without a struggle. He may attempt to make himself visible by processing his hair, acquiring a “boss mop,” or driving a long car, even though he can’t afford it. He may father several illegitimate children by several different women in order to display his masculinity. But in the end he realizes that he is ineffectual in his efforts.

Society responds to him as a thing, a beast, a nonentity, something to be ignored or stepped on. . . . He is confused and in a constant state of rage, of shame and doubt. This psychological set permeates all his interpersonal relationships. . . . His psychological development has been prematurely arrested. This doubt begins at a very early age and continues through his life. The parents pass it on to the child and the social system reinforces the fear, the shame, and the doubt. . . .

With whom, with what, can he, a man, identify? As a child he had no permanent male figure with whom to identify; as a man, he sees nothing in society with which he can identify as an extension of himself. His life is built on mistrust, shame, doubt, guilt, inferiority, role confusion, and despair. . . . He is unskilled and, more often than not, either marginally employed or unemployed. Often his wife . . . is the breadwinner. He is, therefore, viewed as quite worthless by his wife and children. He is ineffectual both in and out of the home. He cannot provide for or protect his family. He is invisible, a nonentity. Society will not acknowledge him as a man. He is a consumer and not a producer. He is dependent upon the white man (“THE MAN”) to feed his family, to give him a job, educate his children, serve as the model that he tries to emulate. He is dependent and he hates “THE MAN” and he hates himself. Who is he? Is he a very old adolescent or is he the slave he used to be?

What did he do to be so BLACK and blue? (The *Black Panther*, May 15, 1967.)

What Newton does not say, but must know, is that such people are the easiest people in the world for demagogues and adventurers to manipulate. In the foreword to his book, *Seize the Time*, Bobby Seale admits that “Marx and Lenin would probably turn over in their graves if they could see lumpenproletarian Afro-Americans putting together the ideology of the Black Panther party. Both Marx and Lenin used to say that the lumpenproletariat wouldn’t do anything for the revolution.” In fact, what Marx and Lenin were worried about was what the lumpenproletariat would do *to* the revolution. In their day, the chief political role of the lumpenproletariat was to be mobilized by reactionary elites as a counterrevolutionary force—the Czar’s Black

Hundreds and the anti-Dreyfus mobs of turn-of-the-century Paris being two notable examples. Their most prominent role in contemporary politics has been in totalitarian movements—paramilitary arms of fascist and Communist parties.

SEALE, NEWTON, and Eldridge Cleaver, the three ideologues of the Panthers, almost compulsively reiterate their belief that (in Cleaver’s words) “in terms of revolutionary theory, the most oppressed people in a given social entity are likely to be the most revolutionary people.” This ludicrous theory, which ignores a century of mass politics, obscures the crucial distinction between blind rebelliousness and authentic revolutionary potential. Sheer nihilism and pathological desperation provide the basic impetus for lumpenproletarian rebellions; they burst forth in elemental frenzy, wreak tremendous violence, and subside just as rapidly. All such rebellions demonstrate the same essential flaw; incapable of self-organization, the lumpenproletariat cannot be brought together in a movement without benefit of an iron-fisted leadership, and invariably that leadership ends by selling out those it claims to represent or, if it should acquire power, by oppressing them even more vigorously than did the old order.

Cleaver, a Stalinist who claims to be a Marxist, a Maoist who claims to be a Leninist, ought to have read enough Marx and Lenin to know that revolutionary theory holds that the most *exploited* class, not the most oppressed people, is likely to be the most revolutionary force in society. To be exploited, one must work, whereas to be oppressed, one need only vegetate. The lumpenproletariat experiences a much greater degree of oppression than does the proletariat—but for that very reason is infinitely less capable of carrying out a social revolution.

And that is the pathos of the Panthers and the entire lumpenproletariat on which their party (as well as the counterpart “revolutionary” nationalist groups which have sprung up lately in other sections of the lumpenproletariat—Young Lords, Patriot party, etc.) is based. The degradation of this class is utterly unearned and undeserved and its resentment morally justified. Nevertheless, it is precisely that unearned degradation which renders it a barbaric threat—not to “capitalism,” but to *all* civilized standards, capitalist or socialist. The very desperation of the lumpenproletarians means that any political pirate with the proper backing, a good hustle, and a few slogans can con them into the bloodiest and most irrational escapades—escapades having nothing to do with anyone’s liberation, least of all their own.

When Newton and Seale “hit the streets,” it was by way of the federal poverty program. This brought them into contact with the juvenile gangs who were to comprise one important source of

recruitment for the party. The other source is perhaps best described by Seale himself:

Huey wanted brothers off the block—brothers who had been out there robbing banks, brothers who had been pimping, brothers who had been peddling dope, brothers who ain't gonna take no shit, brothers who had been fighting pigs—because he knew that once they get themselves in the area of political education (and it doesn't take much because the political education is the ten-point platform and program), Huey P. Newton knew that once you organize the brothers he ran with, he fought with, he fought against, who he fought harder than they fought him, once you organize those brothers, you get niggers, you get black men, you get revolutionaries who are too much (*Seize the Time*, p. 64).

Newton and Seale, while still students at Merritt College, received money from Robert Scheer, an editor of *Ramparts*, "to help get things off the ground," as Seale puts it. A year later, in the late summer of 1966, they founded the Panthers. Their next step was to buy guns, which they financed in part from sales of Mao's "little red book" on the campus at Berkeley. The first party activity was "patrolling" the Oakland police department. This consisted of following police cars with a carload of heavily-armed Panthers. Needless to say, confrontations were provoked, and some of them resulted in shootouts. Numbers of Panthers and police were killed and wounded.

These confrontations with the police earned the Panthers enormous admiration within the black nationalist movement, as well as within the white New Left. Of all the nationalist groups, only the Panthers had dared to "pick up the gun." Furthermore, they picked it up in broad daylight and did everything possible to attract the attention of the police, the community, and the mass media—just the opposite of groups like RAM (Revolutionary Action Movement) which stayed behind closed doors incubating dark conspiracies that never seemed to hatch. Confrontations with "pigs" gave the Panthers a reputation for courage that made it extremely difficult for rival middle-class groups to compete. Such confrontations also gave the Panthers the publicity and glamor necessary for organizing in the ghetto. Shootouts with the cordially hated Oakland police department were supplemented with such inspired audacities as invading the state capitol in Sacramento, armed to the teeth, to protest a gun-control law then being debated. It was not long before the combination of lessened competition from rival nationalist groups, and oceans of publicity, enabled the Panthers to grow into a national organization with thousands of members.

Growth brought its own set of problems. The Panthers' militarized structure created an expensive bureaucracy. In addition, many party members did not hold regular jobs. There are strong indications that some Panther officials ordered

members to commit armed robberies and burglaries as a means of raising money for the party. A number of Panthers have been caught and convicted, but in each case the party leadership has disclaimed all responsibility, stating either that the member was victimized by a frameup, or that he was acting on his own. The party expels any member caught red-handed in criminal actions of this sort, a practice which has led to considerable bitterness on the part of those unlucky enough to get caught.

BUT IT WAS the tactic of "offing the pig," even though it built the party, which became—as Huey P. Newton must have known it would—the party's greatest problem. It is not necessary to believe the Panther contention that a nationwide conspiracy, headquartered in the Justice Department and extending through the FBI to police departments throughout the country, exists to annihilate the Panthers. The predictable spontaneous reactions of typical policemen suffice to account for what has happened.

On October 28, 1967, in the early morning hours, a gun battle occurred between Huey P. Newton and two Oakland policemen. Newton was shot in the stomach; patrolman John Frey was killed, his partner, Herbert Heanes, seriously wounded. Less than a week later three policemen were shot in the Hunters Point project in San Francisco. One died. As Earl Anthony, a former member of the Panthers and still an admirer, reflects in his book, *Picking Up the Gun**::

The *Sun-Reporter*, a weekly black newspaper in San Francisco, reported that police authorities felt it was a Panther retaliation. The Party had time and again stressed that the police were the enemy, and that you don't get your revenge for police brutality and murder by rioting in the streets . . . but you attack the enemy by using guerrilla tactics—sniper attacks, or police station bombings. Although the Party did not execute that attack in Hunters Point, the young black brothers were beginning to accept the leadership of Huey and the Party, and the attack was done Panther style.

The Panther newspaper that week carried a drawing by our revolutionary artist Emory, with pictures of Heanes, Frey, and the three cops shot in Hunter Point. A caption with the drawings said that "three little piggies got away"—referring to the three of the five cops who had survived in the gun battles during that week.

That edition of the Black Panther paper must have started many cops thinking about their personal well-being (pp. 37-38).

In some cases involving shootouts with the police the Panthers have probably been victims and in others victimizers, but the main point is that once the Panthers embarked upon an "off

* Dial Press, 240 pp., \$4.95.

the pig" strategy, an overwhelmingly violent reaction from the police was inevitable. Anyone having the slightest familiarity with the police knows that the one criminal with the least chance of making it alive to the station house is the cop-killer. An organization which declares its belief in cop-killing as a means of social change—no matter how great the short-run benefits in publicity and a "radical" image—is certain to be devastated. And indeed, for all their aggressive and cocky bluster about "picking up the gun" and "self-defense," it is the Panthers and not the "pigs who have paid by far the bloodier price."

FOR THE Panthers the certainty of a swift and merciless police reaction made it both possible and imperative that alliances be formed with whites, which at first meant the New Left. In moving toward this alliance, the Panthers found themselves adopting a hodge-podge ideology designed to give offense to none of the New Left's chaotic tendencies—a mixture of Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Stalin, Castro, Guevara, and Fanon. The New Left, for its part, was so eager to encourage the development of the one black nationalist group that was willing to work with whites that it submerged its multiple differences and united in defense of the Panthers. It turned out, however, that the Panthers, far from wishing to unite the New Left, were preparing to help tear it apart—an objective which was accomplished at the 1969 SDS convention in Chicago.

The preeminence of the "revolutionary" line in the New Left had enabled Progressive Labor, the pro-China Communist party, to acquire great influence in SDS; PLP, after all, was the representative in America of the land of the Cultural Revolution. PLP's opponents in SDS, finding themselves constantly outflanked from the Left, finally countered by charging PLP members with being "phony" Maoists and representing their own faction as the true Maoists. The Panthers, meanwhile, who had been running full-page quotations from Chairman Mao and encomia to China in their newspaper for several months, showed up at the convention with an "ultimatum": SDS must "expel counterrevolutionary PLP or face the wrath of the black revolutionary vanguard." Lacking a majority at the convention, the anti-PLP faction could not really expel the Maoists, but with the help of the Panthers they could and did isolate them. When quotations from Mao were quietly dropped from the Panther newspaper a few months later and replaced by doses of Kim Il Sung of North Korea, more of a neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute, nobody seemed to mind, or even notice.

Some did notice, however, that in announcing a "United Front Against Fascism" conference, to be held in Oakland, in July 1969, the Panth-

ers quoted at length from Georgi Dimitrov, the Stalinist hack identified with the shift by the world Communist movement in the late 20's and early 30's from "Third Period" Communism, which witnessed local Communist parties all over the world engaged in suicidal *putschist* adventures, to the greener pastures of the "Popular Front" period in which alliances with liberals against the common fascist enemy became the order of the day. And indeed, it was at the United Front Against Fascism conference that the "repression" theme—which has by now been very widely sounded throughout the country—was first enunciated, and by no less well-defined a figure than Herbert Aptheker, chief theoretician of the American Communist party. Aptheker's droning oration, "Historical Aspects of the Rising Tide of Fascism Today," literally emptied the hall but it still provided, exactly as Dimitrov had thirty-five years ago, a justification for liberals and radicals to close ranks in defense of "The Movement" against the threat of repression.

The fact that the Panthers were the instrument by which the Maoists were isolated within SDS and that they then invited Herbert Aptheker to make the keynote speech at their conference—where such other prominent members of the American Communist party as Archie Brown, Roscoe Proctor, and William Patterson were also very much in evidence—raises the delicate question of the relation between the Panthers and the Communist Party U.S.A. That such a relation exists is perfectly clear; what is not so clear is its precise nature. It seems doubtful that the Panthers are controlled by the Communists, if only because a lumpen organization is inherently difficult for anyone to control. It is also hard to reconcile the American Communist party's reputation as a "reformist" group with the feverishly revolutionary rhetoric one associates with the Panthers and their supporters. William Kunstler, for example, who headed the defense at the Chicago conspiracy trial and who has also done legal work for the Panthers and other black revolutionists, has lately been dashing from campus to campus making statements like the following to huge student audiences:

If they mean anything, if they are life and death issues, then you must be prepared to offer life or death, and hope it will not be necessary.

You must learn to fight in the streets, learn to revolt, learn to shoot guns. We will learn to do all the things property owners fear.

You may have to take that final step. You may ultimately be bathed in blood. So will others. But you will have to do it.

And a recent article in the Panther newspaper by Connie Matthews, international coordinator of the Black Panther party, resorts to anti-Semitism and the threat of race war in demand-

ing more sacrifices from the "White Left" on behalf of the Panthers:

The White Left in the U.S.A. is comprised of a large percentage of the Jewish population. Before the Black Panther Party took its stand on the Palestinian people's struggle there were problems but the support of the White Left for the Black Panther Party was concrete. However, since our stand the White Left started floundering and became undecided. This leaves us with no alternative than to believe that a large portion of these people are Zionists and are therefore racists.

It was a Zionist judge, Judge Friedman, who sentenced Huey P. Newton to 2-15 years in jail. It was a Zionist judge, Judge Hoffman, who allowed the other Zionists to go free but has kept Bobby Seale in jail and sentenced him to 4 years for contempt charges. . . .

The other Zionists in the Conspiracy 8 trial were willing and did sacrifice Bobby Seale and his role in the conspiracy trial to gain publicity. Once again we condemn Zionism as a racist doctrine. . . . We do not want a race war. From the beginning of the Black Panther Party we have made that crystal clear but we have lost too many lives in order to keep the stand we truly believe in. However, we will not stop fighting until we gain our objectives. If our White allies allow the racist capitalistic system to once again use and misuse them without really diagnosing the situation then we will stand alone. That will ultimately mean Black people fighting alone, which in other words means a race war. We think the decision rests with our White

allies ("Will Racism or International Proletarian Solidarity Conquer?," April 25, 1970).

THE RELATION between the Communist party and the Panthers, then, more likely resembles the relation between the black-power militants and the business Establishment: it is an alliance entered into half by accident and half by design for the mutual advantage of both parties. The Panthers get ideological help, financial help, and legal help; the Communists acquire a new prestige, particularly among the hundreds of thousands of New Left youth who idolize the Panthers and who know of nothing more critical to say of the Communists than that they are reformist. A successful defense of the Panthers could result in what the Maoists of the Progressive Labor party have asserted is the real objective of the Panther-CP nexus: a kind of Mafia-type control over the ghetto masses by the Panthers, and a reassertion by the Communists of the hegemony within the American Left that they enjoyed during the 30's. The prospect seems highly unlikely, but then so did a lot of other things that have happened recently in this country. Whatever the strategy is, the risks are clearly grave, for the alliance between the Panthers and the Communists might well help to stimulate the *real* repression that Eldridge Cleaver says he welcomes as a prelude to "revolutionary war." And that might indeed be the true purpose for which the alliance was formed.

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A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a person's face, heavily shadowed and distorted by a mask or filter. The image is characterized by bright, glowing points of light, possibly representing eyes or other facial features, against a dark, textured background. The overall effect is one of intense, almost abstract, visual impact.

Amsterdam, Antwerp, Auckland, Bali, Bangkok, Barranquilla, Beirut, Berlin, Bogotá, Budapest, Caracas, Cork, Copenhagen, Curitiba, Dallas, Davao, Delhi, Dhaka, Doha, Dublin, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Geneva, Hanover, Hong Kong, Houston, Indianapolis, Istanbul, Jakarta, Jeddah, Lima, London, Los Angeles, Louisville, Luxembourg, Madrid, Manila, Maracaibo, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Montreal, Moscow, Munich, Nagasaki, Nanking, Nassau, New Orleans, New York, Niigata, Osaka, Ottawa, Panama, Paris, Perth, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland, Porto Alegre, Prague, Rangoon, Recife, Rome, Saigon, San Francisco, San Juan, San José, Santiago, Sao Paulo, Seoul, Singapore, Stockholm, Taipei, Tokyo, Vienna, Zagreb.



What Is Society?

The Ideas of Andrea Caffi

Lionel Abel

*Wer nicht die Welt in seinen Freunden sieht
Verdient nicht, dass die Welt von ihm erfahre.
Torquato Tasso—GOETHE*

WHO was Caffi? A man of ideas, admired during his lifetime in Paris, in Leningrad, in Rome, and in Berlin, but always by a circle of friends. And now some of his texts—they are quite extraordinary—brought together under the title *A Critique of Violence*,* have been made available to a much larger circle, to people who, if they did not happen to know him, may happen to like ideas. I must add that Caffi's ideas are of the utmost pertinence, so the *Critique* should find readers. And I hope no reader is going to be put off by occasional blemishes, many of which are due, I can attest, to faulty translation.

Caffi's style, as I knew it in the original, was supple in statement, clear, though nuanced. In fact, I recall his saying to me once that any statement without nuance was very likely to be false. One could, of course, say "two times two makes four," but to say this would be, as Dostoevsky noted, uncharming. Could one, though, without nuance, state some complexity truly? Caffi thought not.

Complex things are said by Caffi again and again in his texts; but now the nuance, without which he thought one could hardly say them, is gone. Reading over again, in *A Critique of Violence*, passages I first read in his own hand in letters to Nicola Chiaromonte, I was struck by the crudeness and heaviness of a prose which in the original, I must insist, was deft, light, and often deadly. Poor Caffi! Confronted with the present translation (it is by Raymond Rosenthal) I can imagine him protesting: "I don't mind going into English, not even into American English, but why can't I bring my rapier?"

It was left out of this collection of his papers

along with the raffishness and old-world charm which were such important aspects of his style. But I should point out here that Caffi, who could write an excellent prose when he wanted to, hardly ever wrote anything for publication. Most of the pieces which appear in *A Critique of Violence* were culled by Nicola Chiaromonte from personal letters sent to him by Caffi during the 1940's. So these texts do not express the ambition of a writer to be made much of or remembered for, forceful thinking or brilliant style; rather, they represent the effort of one individual to stimulate another, to make his knowledge available—and always to someone in particular.

Caffi had style, yes, but not in the sense that he was able to make himself "irresistible" to a public he did not know—Valéry has said that an inventor in the spiritual order must make himself "irresistible." However, Caffi's more modest concern was simply not to disappoint the expectation of insight present in those friends to whom he chose to write. Should these pieces then be offered to a public composed of persons with whom Caffi was not intimate? I recall a luncheon in Paris for the Italian poet, Ungaretti, at which Caffi announced: "Abel has a fantastic idea. He thinks that I can write. . . ." Now was this such a fantastic idea? Caffi had even told me of a novel he had written. A poor novel, he said, and he had destroyed it. (Trotsky, I have been informed by Jean van Heijenoort, also wrote a novel; also poor, it too was destroyed.) Moreover, Caffi admitted to having written a play, a "Racinian tragedy" in Alexandrines, of which all he could remember was one line, which, translated, would run, "For that experiment one had to have a cat," and will hardly recall to anyone the verses of Racine. But, in any case, these secret writings of Caffi's do indicate some will to contact and enter into communication with persons not yet known to him. So if Caffi was perhaps not a "writer" in the normal meaning of that term, yet to some degree, I think, he wanted to be a writer in that sense, too. And I recall a letter of his to Nicola Chiaromonte during the

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* Bobbs-Merrill, 220 pp., \$8.50.

late 40's in which he indicated that he hoped to bring his notes on mythology together in a volume not unworthy to be set beside Marx's *Capital*, Proudhon's *Justice*, and Simmel's great book on money. (It is to be noted that Caffi did not place *Capital* above Proudhon's masterpiece or Simmel's.) In any case, of the projected work on mythology, only some notes, a few of which have been published in *A Critique of Violence*, remain, and if there is to be any work on mythology comparable in scope or achievement with the great texts cited by Caffi in his letter, it will no doubt have to be the structural analysis of myth now being brought off with such learning and intelligence by the French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss.

I must note here, though, that even from the few fragments on mythology by Caffi that we have, it is evident that what he projected about myth would have been very different from what Lévi-Strauss has achieved—in fact, it would have been the very opposite kind of study. For one thing, Lévi-Strauss follows the path broken by Rousseau, whom he calls in *Tristes Tropiques* his “master” and “brother,” telling us that Jean-Jacques “. . . of all the *philosophes* comes closest to being an anthropologist” and that “every page of this book [*Tristes Tropiques*] could have been dedicated to him, had the object thus proffered not been unworthy of his great memory!”

CAFFI, for his part, followed Voltaire. Unlike Lévi-Strauss, and his “master” Rousseau, both interested in origins—the origin of society, the origin of equality, the origin of culture—Caffi would only talk lightly and laughingly about origins, as Voltaire did about the origin of religion, deriving it from the meeting of the earliest scoundrel with the very first fool. Myths were important for Caffi because he found the great questions of philosophy unsolved, and thought they would remain so. For Lévi-Strauss, on the other hand, a proper structuralist elucidation of mythology points to a final answer to the questions of philosophy, and to the fact that this answer will be a materialist one. He suggests in *The Raw and the Cooked* that it might be very desirable to show that “. . . when the mind is left to commune with itself . . . it shows itself to have the nature of a thing among things.” He has also said: “I would not be dismayed if it were demonstrated to me that structuralism must lead to the restoration of a vulgar materialism.” And undismayed by this prospect, Lévi-Strauss often goes out of his way—even when the references are forced and inappropriate—to speak approvingly not just of the political economy or of the sociology but of the “philosophy” of Marx.

No doubt this is why, as Edmund Leach sees it, “Lévi-Strauss persistently maintains . . . he is

a Marxist. . . .” also “. . . a Marxist materialist.”* But what are we to make of the following passage from *Tristes Tropiques* on man in the Neolithic period? “In that myth-minded age Man was no more free than he is today; but it was his humaneness alone which kept him enslaved. As he had only a very restricted control over Nature, he was protected, and to a certain degree emancipated, by the protective cushion of his dreams.” So this is what Lévi-Strauss thinks of man in the far past; but what can he suppose Marx would have thought of man of that time, Marx so unequivocal in his rejection of any kind of myth-making? And specially severe with regard to myth is the Marx of the much-admired *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Yet for this particular work of Marx's, Lévi-Strauss tells us his excitement has “never cooled.” “Rarely,” he writes, “do I tackle a problem in sociology or ethnology without having first set my mind in motion by a reperusal of a page or two from the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Buonaparte*.” Now does Lévi-Strauss really want us to believe that to set his mind in motion for writing one of his celebrated defenses of myth-mindedness and dreaming, he dips into one of the most uncompromising attacks on myth-mindedness and dreaming ever to have been set down? The proletarian revolution for the Marx of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* would be better than the bourgeois revolution insofar as it would be freer of illusion, freer of myth. In his pamphlet Marx wrote: “The bourgeois revolution was more word than deed. The proletarian revolution will be more deed than word.”

Caffi, as interested as Lévi-Strauss in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, sums up its meaning thus: “For Marx, the proletariat is all the closer to redemption when it has nothing to lose but its chains, and among these chains he gives first place to the residues of mythological creation which he terms ‘alienations’: we must annihilate once and for all these dreams and chimeras which still impede total revolt; then, and only then, a new humanity *naked of myth* [italics added], and guided by reason alone, will build a new society, in which life will be governed by the consciousness of reality, the whole of reality, and nothing but reality.”

Can it be that Lévi-Strauss felt justified in ignoring the plain sense of Marx's pamphlet while approving the form or structure of Marx's thought? This may indeed be the case, for the anthropologist has taken a similar line on the topic of the Siberian peoples, who believe that the touch of a woodpecker's beak can cure toothache. Lévi-Strauss approves that belief, though not on the grounds that it is of practical effect. He writes: “The real question is not whether the touch of a woodpecker's beak does in fact cure

* See his article, “Claude Lévi-Strauss, Anthropologist and Philosopher,” *New Left Review*, November-December 1965.

toothache. It is rather whether there is a point of view from which a woodpecker's beak and a man's tooth can be seen as 'going together' (the use of this congruity for therapeutic purposes being only one of its possible uses). . . . Perhaps the anthropologist believes there is a point of view from which myth and the attack on myth can be seen as "going together," but this was certainly not Marx's belief; and Marx, in separating his attack on myth from myth, had precisely therapeutic purposes in mind, as no doubt did the Siberian peoples in connecting teeth with the woodpecker's beak—or so it would seem, anyway, to a layman.*

Caffi opposed Marx's vision of mythology demolished, though admitting it to have an "apocalyptic grandeur." As for Lévi-Strauss, in judging myth, as he freely concedes, he ignores its content, just as he ignores the content of Marx's pamphlet. He writes: "The truth of myth does not consist in a privileged content. It consists in logical relations deprived of content. . . ." Now I do not here propose to dispute with the celebrated anthropologist on the truth of myth, and I do not want to suggest, as I have already indicated, that Caffi's notes on mythology, even taken with other papers of his which may turn up, may be said to equal in any respect the work of analysis Lévi-Strauss has already given us. I do want to say, though, that the attitude of Caffi toward myth was a very different one from Lévi-Strauss's, and to my mind a very much wiser one. We already have Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind*. Had Caffi completed his work on mythology he might well have entitled it *The Civilized Mind*. For if Caffi did not believe that science is a myth, he did not believe either that such civilization as science makes possible requires the destruction of myth. He argued, in fact, that civilization, requiring science, also requires myth, and suggested, too, that barbarism may be defined as a "poverty of mythological life." Moreover, he thought that the very special and ". . . conscientious modern barbarism, that *durch Wissenschaft böseartig geworden* [becoming wicked through science] of which Heine spoke . . ." is characterized ". . . by the will to reduce mythology (that activity which among all others is most free) to a surrogate destined for abject uses." Thus Caffi felt free to criticize any period of civilization which failed to encourage or which destroyed the growth of mythology. And he does not conceal his animus in this regard against the anti-mythological bent of scholasticism. But Lévi-Strauss, looking at scholasticism through Lévi-Straussian spectacles, to be sure, might very well see it as still another myth—that is, as a myth of anti-mythology.

Caffi could be, and was, the moralist of certain high points of civilization, whereas Lévi-Strauss, as a moralist favoring the primitives, has to be critical of civilization taken as a whole.† Yet even

here Lévi-Strauss is unable to free himself from a certain ambiguity. If he prefers the primitives to us in certain respects, he also prefers the most scientific terms for expressing this preference, and these belong to us and not to them. Caffi, I repeat, could be unambiguously in favor of civilized life, whose real model, as he understood it, permits a good deal of myth-making. To be sure, Lévi-Strauss has indicated that he hopes to show how the structure of our most recent science tallies with the structure of the very earliest myths. But what will he have accomplished in demonstrating this? He will not have overcome the ambiguity of his attitude toward the civilized and the primitive—"the raw and the cooked"—he will merely, I think, have consecrated that very ambiguity with still another feat of mind.

II

IN HIS fine introduction to *A Critique of Violence* Nicola Chiaromonte has not failed to mention Caffi's political activity as a socialist, anti-fascist, and anti-totalitarian, including the facts, cited by Caffi himself, of his experience in a Soviet jail. Socialist activity formed an important part of Caffi's life and must be taken into account in any understanding of his ideas. For my own part, I would have wished the story of his life to have been given in somewhat greater detail, but in any case, from those facts about Caffi which Chiaromonte thought most important, and other facts about Caffi which I know at first-hand, it is clear to me that in Caffi one is confronted with an individual life led in such a way as to make possible a particular kind of thought. For in the intransigence of this "rebel" there was not merely the expression of a moral criticism of the established order, and of the desire for a more just, a better society, there was also a realization of the transcendental worth, or value to radical reflection, of a politically valid life.

Marxism offers a guarantee of superior insight into society and politics by those who adopt its methods and principles; Caffi thought any such guarantee of superior insight laughable, even absurd. He did think, though, that one could limit moral error in the judgment of things political and social; intellectual error was, of course, always possible. And Marxism, which proposed to make intellectual error less likely, often tended to blind one to the important part good moral judgment plays, and has to play, in political and

* This is also how it seems to Sir Peter Medawar, the Nobel Prize winner for medicine in 1960. See his recent Romanes lecture, *Encounter*, January 1969.

† It is in this sense that I would set Caffi as a follower of Voltaire against the openly Rousseauian Lévi-Strauss. To be sure, in following Voltaire's acceptance of civilization, Caffi yet departs from Voltaire in accepting myth.

social matters. Thus, for instance, one could be a Marxist and go over to the counterrevolution as did Parvus, who set forth the theory of permanent revolution and then, during the First World War, went over to the side of Germany and worked for the German High Command.

The development of science has of course tended to promote the view that moral probity is inessential to scientific judgment; and who is going to deny the fact that our contemporary doctors, not much better morally perhaps than those of Molière's time, are of considerably more value to their patients? Now Caffi was particularly suspicious of political, social, and historical theories which propose to supplant or make unnecessary the individual's moral judgment. Does Marxism offer to eliminate intellectual error? On the other hand, it seems to induce, if not to require, an initial error of judgment on the part of those who adopt it, that initial error being a wrong judgment of Marxism itself. And I am not speaking merely of the misjudgment of Marxism which was imposed on supporters of Marxism in Stalinist circles. Even among the Fourth Internationalists who followed Trotsky, one was at a political disadvantage if one was critical of what was known as dialectics, that peculiar mixture of epistemology and cosmology developed by Engels, and about which even Lévi-Strauss has recently gone out of his way to speak with a certain respect. But if we turn to "Marxists" noted—at one time or another—for their intellectual work rather than for their politics, we again see an erroneous judgment of Marxism itself as the price of that deliverance from error of which the doctrine is supposed to be the guarantee. For Louis Althusser, for instance, what is important about Marx's thought is not so much tied up with Marx's special judgments of European society and economy of the 19th century, as with the "scientific" methodology he is supposed to have originated, a methodology which, as it turns out, Althusser has derived as much from his reading of Bachelard and of Lévi-Strauss—and of Michel Foucault, too, according to Raymond Aron*—as of Marx himself.

This is not so dissimilar from—and, I think, less good doctrine than—the view advanced by Sidney Hook almost forty years ago in his *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx*, in which he claimed a scientific character for Marx's methodology in economics and sociology, and on the ground that it was the very methodology advocated by Dewey's instrumentalism for any and all disciplines that wanted to be called "scientific." If Dewey's notions about what makes a given discipline deserving of being called "scientific" seem more profound to us than do those of Bachelard, Lévi-Strauss, or Louis Althusser,

they can hardly be as convincing today as when Dewey first advanced them, for we have become aware that scientists themselves are in violent disagreement about the nature of scientific method, a good many of them denying that there is such a thing.

As for Jean-Paul Sartre, in his *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*, he declares: "I consider Marxism to be the ultimate philosophy of our age. . . ." One may ask here, though, what Sartre means by a "philosophy." Does he mean a cosmology? I think he has indicated that he does not. An epistemology, perhaps? But would it not seem odd to say of the epistemology one supports that it is "the ultimate" epistemology ". . . of our age"? One speaks as an ideologist in making this kind of statement. Which tells us that when Sartre calls Marxism "the ultimate philosophy of our age," he must mean by philosophy not a mixture of cosmology and epistemology, to be sure, but a mixture of ideology and epistemology. But if it is odd to call an epistemology "ultimate," would it not be even more odd to say that of a *mixture* of epistemology and ideology?

It is to be noted that the notions of these three "Marxists" on Marxist philosophy are to be explained, in part at least, by purely political considerations. Now Caffi, who recognized no political obligation to say anything about Marx he did not think was true, says flatly in the two pieces in which Marxism is considered in *A Critique of Violence*, that Marx was *neither an epistemologist nor a cosmologist*. He writes: "It is absurd to look in Marx's work for a 'system' or even a group of rules that could guide us in the elaboration of 'every possible science.' There does not exist a Marxist theory of knowledge just as there is not a dialectical materialist cosmology. Marx and Engels had the right to call 'scientific' their special inquiries into the actual state of affairs of society in the middle of the 19th century, and also their more general considerations insofar as they documented and reasoned about them in accordance with the norms universally adopted by the men of science of their time; but . . . they were unaware of the fact that every 'scientific' truth is provisional, indefinitely rectifiable, and also capable of being overturned." He adds that ". . . for everything that concerns the history of the Industrial Revolution, the class struggle in France and England in the 19th century, Marx's work has the value of enduring knowledge."

As against Jean-Paul Sartre's judgment that Marxism is the "ultimate philosophy" of our age, Caffi asserts that ". . . one can only assign Marx a rather honorable but minor position (between a Hobbes or a Feuerbach?) among philosophers." But that Caffi did not lack appreciation for Marx's power and vitality of thought is evident from the following judgment:

* See Aron's excellent discussion of Althusser's brand of "Marxism" in *D'Une Sainte Famille à l'Autre*.

This capacity of Marx to bring out facts—masses of facts—and grip them in the vise of penetrating judgments exerted an irresistible power on the best minds between 1890 and 1900, when one found in so many other thinkers, historians, and scientists in every field only diluted analyses and the shapeless generalizations of specialists or eclectics. Perhaps one will end by identifying the mentality of an epoch (that of the two or three decades which followed 1848) decisively refractory to metaphysical constructions by a “philosophy” scornful of systems and pure ideas, enthusiastic about *facts* in their harsh complexity, in which Marx could stand beside Darwin and Claude Bernard on the one hand and Flaubert, Ibsen, and Tolstoy on the other.

So far I have merely indicated that Caffi in his judgments of Marx and Marxism did not fall into the characteristic errors suggested by these topics. But now I want to point out a deeper judgment of Marxism by Caffi, and a judgment he could hardly have made without consulting his political life. I quote from “Concerning Marx and Marxism”:

An essential point remains to be examined, that is, the claim, advanced by Marx with much more absoluteness than by the *philosophes* of the 18th century, to have brought about the junction between science and utilitarian action: i.e. the idea of a strict application of scientific methods to industrial production as well as to the organization of society and the direction of moral life.

That there exists a *techné* for the governing of men is certain: it is an art-science like medicine, pedagogy, the art of war, etc. But can one conceive that there exists a *techné* of social transformations, class struggle, revolutions, “the greatest happiness for the greatest number”?

In short, one can certainly “scientifically” manipulate the masses. But is it thinkable that, by doing so, one shapes and regulates the “human condition”? To pose this question means to raise the question of justice, and of that which, through this word, can be glimpsed and understood.

III

PERHAPS EVEN more important, though, than Caffi’s judgments of Marx and of Marxism, is his judgment of violence, and of the declared readiness to use it for socially good ends. His consideration of violence, in the essay from which the whole group of his papers takes its title, is not just the expression of some further opinion on this matter, but a decisive act of thought. Caffi’s is probably the most powerful argument against the use of violence ever presented, and makes all that has been written in recent years about violence by even such people as A. J. Muste and Paul Goodman seem unsophisticated, when not downright foolish. And

evidently Caffi’s thought on this subject would have not been possible if in his own life he had pursued violent ends or if he had been particularly concerned to protect himself against the violence of others.

But, as a matter of fact, Caffi’s criticism of violence is not fundamentally a moral one. He does not think it *wrong* to fight, and he certainly does not support or argue for pusillanimous flight when facing an evil enemy. What he says, rather, is this: There have always been people ready to use force, and there have always been people ready to criticize the use of it. Is there any reason why at the present time (his essay was written in 1945, just after the close of the Second World War) those who want to criticize the use of force should go over to any of the contemporary groups who are relying on it? Moreover, he brings out something else which is often omitted from the consideration of those who try to justify force in terms of a single deed (as an act of self-defense or in protection of someone else); Caffi points out that when people talk about force as justified they must mean the continued use of force, and not its employment on a single and exceptionally dramatic occasion. And Caffi asks: Is there any reason why the critic of the use of force should share his criticism of it with any of the present-day groups utilizing it? This question, of course, takes on concrete meaning if we relate it to the original claims of the Russian Bolsheviks. For it was they who asked the critics of force to yield up to them, the Bolsheviks, all criticism of all other users of it. Thus Lenin and Trotsky, with the armed forces of Russia, the Red Army, and the secret police at their command, were not only to use force themselves, but also to be the only true or proper critics of its use. They, not their victims, among whom there were not a few socialists and anarchists. Now Caffi was far from thinking that this was a piece of illogic on the part of the Bolshevik leaders. If they were going to direct the masses in a “final conflict,” after which with the worldwide victory of the proletariat, force, or at least the massive application of force, would no longer be required, then were they not right to say that they, the users of force, were the real critics of its use, and that the pacifists, anarchists, and socialists were in fact an encumbrance to the proper criticism of force, as indeed to the proper criticism of many other things?

The Bolsheviks were mistaken on only one point, unhappily a decisive one. The conflict in which they tried to lead humanity was by no means the final conflict called for in the “Internationale.” We cannot think today that force will be used once and finally and never be called upon again. We must think of the historical future as a long and complicated labyrinth in which there will be many combats and not just

a single decisive bout with one single monster. Force, then, may on occasion be used wisely; but we will know after and not before its use, and certainly no one has the right to assert that he or his group represents a valid synthesis of both force and its criticism.

Let us be very clear about this point. The claim to use force seldom relinquishes the claim to be the proper critic of all others using it. But is it not the case that at least one of the credentials persons may show for criticizing the use of force by others is that they have thus far not used force themselves? This credential cannot be conceded, for example, to the leaders of the Black Panthers, who demand weapons for their organization and insist on the right of their members to use these, at the same time that they abusively attack the police, whose violence they describe as being directed essentially against them. Now, to be sure, there is a special problem about the Panthers, insofar as they represent a distinct ethnic group which may well claim not to be genuinely represented by the local police agencies and which in fact may be victimized by such agencies. All this, however, has little bearing on the question I am considering here. The Black Panthers have won support from many people because they are thought of as weak and exposed to the violence and prejudice of local constabularies. But the Panthers, in their turn, present themselves not as weak, or at least as hoping not to remain weak. They insist that they are—or will become—strong, and that they have the right to use strength, not just weakness, violently. They are by no means hesitant in their expression of prejudice, and in addition to all this, they insist on retaining the right to criticize the violence of other groups, notably the local police agencies.

From Caffi's point of view, no group can be trusted to hold in its hand the instruments of violence together with the right to determine when and how they can be used, and at the same time be regarded as the best judge of the use of force. Here Caffi's view, largely historical, is based on the political fate of Jacobinism in France and Bolshevism in Russia. I must admit that when I first read his piece on violence more than twenty years ago in *Politics* I was not convinced by it. The essay is far more convincing today. But I should like to point out that the position for rejecting the use of force is, even without Caffi's subtle argument, much more persuasive today than it was twenty years ago. If we are to look forward to a long period of many struggles, with no final denouement in sight, is there not a strong case for the critics of violence never to invalidate their criticism of it by making themselves responsible for its use, and for denying to any group which is willing to use violent methods the same authority to criticize violence possessed by those who have rejected it?

IV

CAFFI'S NOTION of the "revolutionary," whom he counterposes to the mystic, is a very surprising one, and may not immediately gain one's assent:

I do not consider it absurd to counterpose to the mystic, as his equal in the effort to conquer a full measure of humanity, the authentic revolutionary. I will add that, for me, real revolutionaries are not only a Proudhon and a Bakunin, but also a Voltaire, a Herzen, a Tolstoy. By revolutionary I mean a man who has (1) an irresistible passion for arousing and setting in motion the men who meet him; (2) an active, pulsating sympathy for all those who suffer, are victims of injustice, have need of a help that is not only that of words. The fanatics of the revolutionary "idea," that is, or some abstract scheme, such as Blanqui or Lenin, have the same relationship to the true revolutionary as the rigorous discipline of the Jesuits when compared to the mysticism of Dionysius the Areopagite.*

What is surprising in Caffi's judgments is, of course, his refusal to regard Lenin as a revolutionary, and his attribution of that term to intellectuals and writers who did not lead revolutionary actions as Lenin certainly did. Moreover, if Lenin is not to be regarded as a revolutionary, then how could one apply the term to such lesser men as Nasser, Castro, Guevara, Cleaver? Would Caffi have considered even Mao a revolutionary? If he could not consider Mao a revolutionary, then maybe his use of the term "revolutionary" is a wrong one; perhaps we should reject it out of hand. But very clearly the reason Caffi would not regard Lenin as a revolutionary and would not have regarded Castro, Nasser, Guevara, or even Mao, as revolutionaries, is that all of these men, while they did indeed overturn existing governments, also participated in the setting up of more efficient terror apparatuses, replacing the ones they had overturned. As Caffi will not accept the user of force as the critic of its use, so he will not accept the dictator as the revolutionary. In the unwillingness to keep the figure of the dictator distinct from the revolutionary, he even sees one of the major aberrations of modern times.

* Caffi's association of the revolutionary with the mystic is supported, I think, by the following remarks of Gershom Scholem, the learned authority on Jewish mysticism. I quote from Scholem's article, "Mysticism and Society," *Diogenes*, Summer 1967: "This brings us back to the alternative which the mystic faces: will he submit to the traditional authority and the social forms it has taken on or will he draw from his own experience a new claim to authority and set it up in conflict with the traditional one? . . . Where all and everything is centered around an experience the very nature of which implies a dissolution of all natural forms and, even more so, of all historical forms in order to bring about the act of mystical union, then it would be only reasonable to expect a definite preponderance of the revolutionary, nay, the anarchic aspect of mysticism as a social phenomenon."

CAFFI'S VIEW of the "revolutionary" is an extreme one, but it may serve to correct some of the totally wrong notions of the "revolutionary"—also of the "radical"—now prevalent. To make this point with some fullness of detail, I must turn for a moment from Caffi's text to events I was recently witness to on the campus of the State University of New York at Buffalo.

I would summarize what happened there as follows: a group of students, determined to shut the university down, subjected the campus to vandalism and violence as a result of which the acting president, Peter Regan, turned to the local police agency to restore order. The restoration of order on the part of the police was also violent, even more so than the original disruption by the students. In any case the campus, as a result of the police action and the student disruption, was in chaos for some time.

What concerns me here is the attitude taken up by the faculty of the State University of New York at Buffalo toward the two eruptions of violence, that which came from the students and that for which the police were responsible. In general it may be said that the faculty, at least in the departments of arts and letters, was concerned to protect the students who had been violent and turned its anger against the police, and also against the university authorities, notably acting president Regan who had called the police. Now the assumption of the liberal faculty who took this attitude was that the violence of the students was an expression of radicalism, the violence of the police an expression of conservatism or reaction. But were the students really revolutionary or radical in their violence? The whole question lies there. Is it revolutionary or radical to burn books, throw fire bombs, steal or destroy office equipment, and prevent classes from being held? In what sense can any such activities be called radical? Is it in any sense more radical to do any of these things than to do what the police themselves did when called upon, which was to try to break the heads of the so-called student "radicals"? Thinking over the events, I have to conclude that there were no radicals on the Buffalo campus, nor was "radicalism" involved in the student disruptions. There were on the Buffalo campus only two different police forces, a police force of students in the first case, involved in a kind of police riot, and the local constabulary in the second case, also involved in a kind of riot, though having superior force at its disposal. That my colleagues of the liberal arts faculty could see only the one police force and took the other group of policemen for radicals, is only an indication of their regular weakness of mind when it comes to judging social and political matters.

Why do I say that the student "radicals" acted as a kind of police force? Let it be perfectly clear

that I am talking only of those who had resolved to shut down the university, something the vast majority of students and faculty members by no means desired. Now a shut-down could only be achieved by applying force. How do I know that the so-called "radicals" wanted the university closed? If they did not conceal that such was their aim, on the other hand they did not broadcast it, either. But I have first-hand evidence that this was indeed their objective. When, at the height of the disruption, with the police off the campus, the administration temporarily suspended a number of students who were thought to be leaders in the disruptions, the department of American studies issued a statement in behalf of some of the most "radical" among them, including one who has since been expelled. The statement announced that its signatories would not abide by the administration's decision, that they would provide teaching space for those of the suspended students who were engaged in teaching, and try "to procure financial support for these activities." The statement declared:

This community cannot tolerate judicial procedures that deny due process, the right to confront accusers, and specification of charges. Such procedures constitute an illegitimate use of authority. . . .

One might suppose this statement was gotten out by resolved and intransigent believers in democracy. One of the signatories was the chairman of the department of American Studies.

Also among the names appended to the statement was that of a teaching assistant whom I knew to be a friend of a former student of mine. I had reason to think that this teaching assistant held political views not too unlike my own, and so I telephoned him. What I wanted to know was why he had signed a statement in behalf of students who were thought to have led disruptive acts and some of whom were known to have said their aim was to shut down the university. He replied that such was his aim, too. He also wanted the university shut down, for it was an immoral institution serving a government fighting an immoral war. There was not a word about this of course in the statement he had signed—it called for struggle against "repressive measures," but he himself was aiming at repressing the entire university, and certainly without authority to do this from its members. Now it was quite impossible to argue with him. His notion was that his behavior was "revolutionary"; thus he was in some way connected with Cleaver and Castro, and through them with Mao and Lenin. His idea that he was acting like a "revolutionary" served to hide from him the fact that in trying to repress an entire university he was behaving not as a socialist or liberator, but as a policeman.

BUT TO come back to Caffi's notion of the revolutionary. I know that Caffi did regard Gandhi as a revolutionary, and of course Gandhi did lead a revolutionary movement, though he led it, to be sure, with the preachment of nonviolence or, if one is to translate correctly the Indian term he used, *spiritual conflict*. I must confess that for most of the time that I was interested in radical social action, I would have awarded the palm of "revolutionary" to Lenin almost without reflection and would even have denied it to Gandhi. Today I am rather inclined toward Caffi's view. Quite recently I read with interest Erik Erikson's excellent *Gandhi's Truth*, and the very convincing portrait of the Mahatma which emerged from Erikson's description of a fateful moment in Gandhi's life, was certainly that of a revolutionary and of a political genius at that. And so in raising the question, Gandhi or Lenin?, I find I cannot answer in favor of Lenin as I would have some years back. Take this one remark which I have from Trotsky's *New Course*. Of Leninism, Trotsky says in that book: "It is warlike from head to foot." Warlike. The word sounded better some years ago than it does today, for have we not come to think that a policy which is warlike may express a minus rather than a plus of political content? Has not Theodore Draper pointed out that American policy over the past twenty years has been misguided and aberrant precisely insofar as it was determined by military rather than by political calculations?

It has been said against Gandhi's doctrine that it could not serve in any struggle against a totalitarian state like Hitler's or Stalin's, that Gandhi owed his success to the fact that his antagonists, the British, were so civilized. But the answer is very clear. Hitler was not overthrown by violent means from within; he was defeated only by the superior weight of metal in the hands of enemy troops; nor was Stalin overthrown from within. So the fact that Gandhian methods would not have prevailed against Hitler or Stalin is by no means a proof that other, more "revolutionary" methods would have prevailed against them. Suppose then we raise the question of Lenin against Gandhi somewhat differently.

I propose to take as a model situation for testing Leninism against Gandhism—and both of these against liberalism—the problem of opening residence to blacks on a restricted street.

I have seen what happens when someone is persuaded on a street restricted to whites to sell a house or land to blacks. Almost invariably there is a decline of the house and land values on that block. This, the liberal may say, is not his affair, and people ought to pay personally for having associated the stability of land and property values with the absence of black residents. But what the liberal here no doubt refuses to see is that white owners do in fact suffer from

the entrance of blacks into their neighborhoods. It is *their* property which loses value, *their* investments which are depreciated. By refusing to recognize the suffering of the white property owners in this situation, the liberal often alienates them, sometimes to the defeat of his program.

The Leninist in this situation would not at all ignore the fact that he is causing the white property owner some degree of suffering. Nor would he ignore the great likelihood that such suffering might be politically disadvantageous to him and threaten his program. The Leninist, to put his program through, would realize the necessity of threatening the white property owner with still greater suffering than that which would follow naturally from the purchase of residences or land on his block by blacks. Undoubtedly the Leninist procedure here, at least in terms of a short-range view, must be judged more realistic than the liberal's.

Now let us see what a Gandhian approach to the same situation would be. Gandhi, if one may infer from the techniques he used in the major campaigns he waged, and from his general understanding of men and their ways, would, I think, never have ignored any more than the Leninist the degree of suffering or deprivation that the opening of residences to blacks in a white district might cause the whites. I do not think, though, that he would have judged such suffering as his policy might cause the whites as a mere prelude to even harsher policies toward them. I think he would have sympathized with the whites who suffered even though he would not have approved the cause of their suffering, that is to say, the type of segregation on which the house and land values of their property had been based. If determined to act against segregation, Gandhi—or in any case my model of Gandhi—would very probably undertake a fast so as to show the white property owners that their suffering had not been lost sight of, but was in fact inconsequential as compared with the kind of suffering he, Gandhi, the leader of the policy of desegregation, was willing to undergo. Moreover, the cunning of the technique, for there is cunning in it, lies in the fact that in any such case the suffering of the desegregationist leader would be in the present and dramatic, whereas the suffering of the white property owners would be in the future and speculative. It seems to me that if we compare the three approaches to the problem of desegregating a given block in the terms described here, it is the Gandhian approach alone that would give promise of success, and without the use of police or military force, and hence of the three it is the only one which, in any true sense of the words, can be called "radical" or "revolutionary." Is one really a radical or a revolutionary when one depends on the military and the police to the degree that Lenin and his heirs have done?

V

BEHIND CAFFI's judgment of the revolutionary, and his various, but I think connected, judgments of violence, Marxism, justice, mythology, there is, I think, a view of society, which I take to be his most fundamental notion, though one which is very hard to describe and is nowhere clearly stated in his text. Deriving it only in part from his text, I have taken the liberty of adding some enlargements of my own, based, to be sure, on details which I remember from many conversations with him.

What was society to Caffi? I shall answer this question indirectly by pointing to the ideas of someone else, namely, the Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, in whose *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (some ideas of which have been given popular expression in this country by René Wellek) four levels of the literary work are distinguished: the signs, that is, the mere sounds of the words employed, or the mere notations of the words on the printed page; the meanings of these words or signs; the objects designated by such meanings; and, finally, what are referred to as *Die Ansichten*, or appearances, but which also may be referred to as tonalities, atmospheres, or perhaps even as nuances. No doubt many would agree with Ingarden's structuring of the literary work, and would accept, too, the judgment that in this kind of structuring, that which we may refer to as appearances, atmospheres, tonalities, nuances, must be conceded a pervasive if inexpressible importance. How many, though, would accept Caffi's rather similar structuring of society, in which, he thinks, as in the literary work, what most eludes definition is most important and most real?

To be sure, Caffi sees one very great difference between the reality of the literary work and that of society. When a literary work becomes unreal one can put it down, while one still remains enclosed by society, whatever is happening in it. Let us suppose that a sonnet, as one continued to read or reread it, gradually lost its nuances, or, as Ingarden termed these, its appearances. One would stop reading the sonnet. Society, however, is that which continues to hold us in its grip even when it has lost the reality it has once had for us. No sonnet can force us to adapt a whole judgment of literature to rhymes in it which we may not like. Society, however, continually forces us to adjust our notion of the social good to the social facts we are presented with. And society's pressure on us in this regard is backed up not only by physical force but also by the force of intellectual opinion. Now Caffi has two points to make about all this, the first being that the power of social actuality has to be challenged. The social facts are not to be regarded as powerful beyond their realities as values, that is to say,

as appearances, atmospheres, tonalities, nuances. And the second point Caffi has to make is that it is very important socially not to forget whatever experiences of the good one has had in society, and, most especially, when that good is gone from society.

Thus society for Caffi can be called real only in that normative judgment which finds the social facts to its liking. Society, he tells us, exists "in its true sense wherever . . . a preeminent importance" can be attached to living "in a network of spontaneous, equalitarian, and 'civil' social relations. . . ." For only then can "the problems of justice and happiness have real meaning." And society for Caffi is once again the recollection with others—no matter how small the group be—of what society once was when it was valid, together with the projected hope of restoring it to that state again. The appearances that constitute the tissue of the social need never disappear entirely; they can be created and recreated in the discourse of persons who assemble freely to testify that these have not been forgotten. To be sure, society in this ultimate and highly refined sense may seem indistinguishable from what Caffi has also referred to as "mythology." He tells us this himself: ". . . in my view, the proper sphere of mythology is that species of human communion which I call society *par excellence*. . . ." Seeing the efforts of the early Christians as fundamentally *social* in this very special sense, Caffi insists on ". . . the force and freshness of the Gospels and the strange frenzy of Paul's Epistles, which remain intact after we have made the maximum effort to free ourselves from the prejudice some twenty centuries of adoration have instilled. . . ." But I think I should quote at some length from Caffi's most unusual judgment of the Gospels. It gives the substance of his whole notion of society:

. . . . What strikes us above all is the genuinely popular enthusiasm of the Gospels in which are wholly fused the story revealing astonishingly new qualities with the imperious demand that one change one's life at once. . . . There is here neither a hierarchy of "holiness," of virtuosity in the practice of spiritual life, as in Buddhism, nor an army marshalled together with a leader at its head armed with all power, as in Islam. Paul's "church" alone entails a true community: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? . . . Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers . . . for we the leaders are laborers together with God . . . even until this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place. . . ."

The "good tidings" are addressed to the *real* society, not the organized one; to a people completely extraneous to the state, who do not even struggle against Caesar since between their

universe and that in which Caesar rules there is no common measure.*

PERHAPS IT WILL BE said that Caffi's notion of society points to something much more like a meeting of friends than to that interlocking system of manipulation and coercion for which, in the minds of many, the term "society" stands. But then is not Caffi's notion of society one much too refined to cover the social facts we nowadays confront? Here I should like to point out that it was Caffi, and precisely, I think, because of the refinement of his ideas, who alone of our contemporaries properly assessed the social facts, and knew that bourgeois society was quite gone when the rest of us thought it still extant. In one of his finest texts, entitled

* Just a word or two about methodology, which, since Caffi almost never discussed questions of method, I shall confine to this footnote. I take it that in making the judgment he did of society Caffi relied in the main on a literary as distinct from a scientific model. What is a scientific model? Trotsky, I should say, is using a scientific model when he argues that to dispense with the use of force in politics is like disregarding the law of gravitation in physics. (It is to be noted that the contemporary "revolutionary," Abbie Hoffman, presents himself as ready to disregard the law of gravity in physics, but as subservient to the law of force in politics.) In Trotsky's judgment, a structural similarity is shown to link political coercion with gravitational attraction. Moreover, no values are involved; in making his judgment Trotsky refers to nothing but facts, perfectly adjusted to *l'esprit géométrique*. What is a literary model? It is one that is directed to a normative judgment, a judgment that cannot be made without calling on *l'esprit de finesse*. An excellent example of this kind of model is given by Pascal in fragment 931 of his *Pensées*: "Nothing could make us better understand the ridiculousness of a bad sonnet than to consider its nature and model and then to imagine a woman or a house modeled like that." And Pascal then goes on to say—though not in the same fragment—that judgments of value are incredibly complicated and cannot be made with any degree of rightness without *l'esprit de finesse*.

Spengler based descriptions of facts on purely literary models, and Marxists have tried to base judgments of value on scientific models alone. But a scientific model is often as inadequate for normative judgment as a literary model is for the description and analysis of facts. I must add here that Northrop Frye in *Daedalus*, Spring 1970, has advocated the employment in the discussion of society of two literary models. But obviously he does not understand the proper use of such models for he thinks of them in terms of the description and analysis of facts, and here is his description of what happened in connection with the People's Park in California: "... a vacant lot with a fence around it became assimilated to the archetype of the expulsion from Eden. . . . A student editorial informed us that the lot was 'covered with blood' because, like all the rest of the land in North America, it has been stolen from the Indians (murder of Abel, archetype). The expelling angels in this symbolism were (as in Blake's version of it) demonic, and the police, with their helmets and bayonets and gas masks were endeavoring, with considerable success, to represent the demonic in its popular science fiction form. . . ." I cite this as a very clear instance of literary models wrongly used. Here, a scientific model, since no value judgment was made, would have been more useful. I need not add that Caffi did not at all disdain reliance on scientific models when it came to the analysis of social facts.

"Bourgeoisie and Bourgeois Order," a text dated 1952, he asks:

But what is left of the very principle of private property, guaranteed, intangible, "sacred"? What is left, above all, of the "good conscience" with which every boss at one time called himself "master of his house"?

And answers his question thus:

There isn't a financier, an industrialist . . . an exporter-importer . . . who would dare hope to maintain his privileges for a single day without the constant, active, and legal aid of "public authorities"; and it is under the control of such authorities that all questions of wages and prices are regulated.

In historical terms, though, here is his answer:

Feudal society, the society which lasted from the 10th to the 13th centuries, was dead before a formation equalling it in the clarity of its structure had been affirmed its heir. "Bourgeois society" did not issue from the pre-capitalistic magma until the period between the 17th and 18th centuries. In its turn, bourgeois society had died without its place being occupied by a valid successor. We live in the disorder caused by this absence.

This judgment goes to the heart of the present social facts. Bourgeois society, according to Caffi, is dead, and this despite the continuing existence of the system of production on which it rested. Bourgeois society thus was dead even before the clever Keynesian economists had refuted the predictions of our Marxists that capitalism had to go. Society does not exist today: this is the all-important fact, and it is unchanged by the continued existence of democratic forms. (This, I should say, our liberals have not understood. On the other hand, it is not true that democratic forms have disappeared, as many radicals insist. What is true is that the society which gave such forms their meaning is quite gone.) Now it is the absence of what was once known as bourgeois society which explains the astonishing changes we have seen in this country since the early 60's. This is why the young have taken to altercations, often violent, with their elders. And this is the reason why television has had such extraordinary effect, and not, as some fancy, the magic of the machine itself. And when we think of the bands of young men led by priests and ministers pouring blood on draft records and even trying to set fire to the official buildings which house them, we should reflect that when bourgeois society still had some life in it, it was considered an honor, not a moral disgrace, to die for the fatherland. Bourgeois society lived by the deaths of the young; the value we now accord to the lives of the young is the sign that we think it dead.

I am struck, too, by Caffi's notion that there is not a single boss today with a good conscience. It is to be noted that Caffi says this without cen-

sure, he does not call the bosses names. But the fact is—I think it cannot be denied—that the privileged and the wealthy of today all seem deprived—whatever their power—of any justification for such privilege or power, though they are not ready to yield up their privilege and power, and in this sense can be said to have opted for barbarism. For only in periods of what must be called barbarism have men with power and privilege not possessed ideas justifying their advantages. And at the opposite end of the spectrum we see that the youthful “revolutionaries,” bent on extremism, are not too different in character from those they have chosen as antagonists. For as the wealthy and privileged are lacking in justification for their exceptional status, and yet have no intention of yielding it up, so the youthful “revolutionaries” say they will not desist from radical and even violent action until a theory justifying such action, a theory they still lack, has been provided them. Thus on the Right, as on the Left, the barbarisms emerge, and I must say the prospect for occupying some middle-ground between them becomes grimmer every day. Now evidently Caffi saw all this coming as early as 1946 when he wrote:

So it is clear that the fabric of relations and common actions forming society is of an extreme fragility. After the hecatombs of 1914-1918 not much was left of European society . . . and after the second devastation experienced by all civilized countries, it would be hard to find even vestiges of it. Thus we can imagine

. . . what remained of “the life of society” in the Paris of 1793-94, or in the St. Petersburg of 1918-19. What is involved here is not only the breaking of ties, but the fact, even more decisive, that in such parlous times, the individual can remain aloof, “above the mob and the battle,” only if he is endowed with exceptional heroism, or wisdom, or even saintliness. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he stumbles, loses his footing, and joins the pack of howling wolves, or forgetting his patrimony of culture, falls back on the elementary reactions of the patriot, behaving as a member of a specific social class, blinded by more or less sordid resentments.

BUT HOW, it may be asked, can the expression of such views help us? No doubt each of us knows someone who has already lost his footing. For we have passed the stage when we first heard the wolf packs; nowadays it is hard to hear anything else. But how are we to profit from the notion that only exceptional wisdom or heroism or saintliness can be of any avail? However, to realize how exceptional the ordeal is going to be does prepare one, I think, to be more forgiving of failure in oneself, as in others, and in this I think there is some value, morally and intellectually. Perhaps this is all that Caffi offers us, but what other thinker has offered us more? Marcuse? McLuhan? Noam Chomsky? Norman O. Brown, perhaps? Would it do us any good whatever to think their thoughts as we go on into the mounting social darkness, toward nobody knows just what?

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The Future of Social Democracy

John Mander

IS SOCIAL DEMOCRACY becoming the dominant species of politics in Western Europe? Is Europe haunted by a fresh specter—the resurgence of a non-Marxist social democracy? Six months ago, most observers would have answered in the affirmative. A great social-democratic victory in Sweden (in September 1968) had been followed by a social-democratic return to power in Germany for the first time in forty years (in September 1969). In England, on the other hand, a Labour government, elected with a powerful majority in 1966, had been in the doldrums for three years—despite important liberalizing reforms—and had suffered catastrophic regional defeats (the loss of London, and the majority of Borough and County Councils in Great Britain). But the economic tide was on the upturn, largely thanks to Labour's Roy Jenkins, and the opinion polls and by-elections indicated that the swing against Labour—at one time 15-25 per cent—was steadily diminishing. Then, in the early spring of this year, the Austrians went the way of the West Germans, and gave the Social Democrats 48.4 per cent of the vote—though not an absolute majority in Parliament. Bruno Kreisky, a Jew and (like his comrade-in-arms Willy Brandt) a former exile in Scandinavia with a Scandinavian wife, became the first Social Democratic Chancellor of Austria since the 20's. Did this point to a "Scandinavianization" of German-speaking Europe? In Scandinavia itself, the recent elections in Denmark and Norway—where anti-social-democratic coalitions are at present, precariously, in power—point clearly to a social-democratic return to power in the early 70's. At the same time, in Australasia, the Labour parties of Australia and New Zealand have increased their votes impressively (Australia 47 per cent; New Zealand 44.3 per cent)—and would have formed the government in Australia, were it not for the peculiarities of the preferential-vote system. For a moment, it looked as though we were in the balmy days of 1945-50

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when social democracy achieved its greatest victories in these countries—and in most cases either formed, or was represented in, the government.

My purpose in this article—written after the defeat of Harold Wilson in Great Britain—will be to examine the present state of the game, to determine if possible why social democracy has flourished in certain countries and not in others, and to risk an intelligent guess at future trends. I believe that a definite pattern emerges from even the most cursory examination of the facts, and allows of a greater degree of generalization than has hitherto been attempted. Thus, I shall assert (and hope to prove) that social democracy has flourished best in recent years in what (for want of a better word) I shall call "Germanic" Europe; equally, that it has fared poorly on the whole in "Latin" Europe—that is to say in France, Italy, and (to judge from necessarily clandestine reports) Spain and Portugal. Among the "Germanic" countries I would include not only Germany, Austria, Benelux, and Scandinavia, but also Britain and certain British Commonwealth countries closely resembling her—Australia, New Zealand, and, to a lesser extent, Canada. I shall exclude both the United States, whose development has been along very different lines, and the Third World. This may seem a trifle peremptory, since many countries of the Third World claim to be socialist, or at least "progressive." But it is only necessary to look a little at what goes on behind the socialist label to realize that to include, say, Egypt or India would simply vitiate any attempt at a definition of social democracy. Is Nasser's Egypt social-democratic? It is doubtfully socialist, and quite certainly not democratic. India under Mrs. Gandhi may be socialist in intention, but is hardly so in practice—though it is admittedly democratic. There are exceptions to the rule, certainly—for example, Israel, Malta, and Singapore, or Mauritius and Madagascar. Here, parties resembling (or deriving from) European social democracy are either very strong or already in power. But while half-a-dozen Third World parties might meet the definition of social democracy I shall want to give, it is significant that this is chiefly the case in countries very strongly influenced by European—

usually British—political concepts and institutions. Too frequently, the label “socialist” is a fig-leaf hiding something a good deal less acceptable—though no doubt more potent.

If one draws the lines in this way, the most striking fact about “Germanic” Europe is the coincidence of strong social-democratic or other left-wing parties with the virtual extinction of Communism as a political force. This is true both of the continental states and of the Scandinavian and British Commonwealth states. Shortly after the war, the Communist vote was far from negligible in many of these countries. But between 1945 and 1970 there has been a steady decline from a rough average of 10 per cent to a present average of 2-3 per cent or even less.* The consistency of this decline in the Germanic countries is impressive; and the reasons for it hardly need to be gone into. The Communists, sharing the prestige of the Soviet victories over Nazism, and profiting from their role in the various Resistance movements, took a fair slice of the working-class vote at the end of the war. But in none of those countries was that vote sufficient to give them the kind of grip on working-class organizational structures that they achieved in France and Italy. Lacking this base, their support fell away with the coming of the cold war after 1947 and never recovered. Further blows, in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, led to further defections, particularly among the intelligentsia. The most striking recent illustration of this was the sudden drop in the Swedish Communist party's support, after a fair rally in the early 60's, at the general election held a month after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The only exceptions in Germanic Europe are, rather surprisingly, Iceland and Finland—a warning, incidentally, not to take the “sex and socialism” image of Scandinavia too much for granted. In Iceland, whose *Althing* can claim to be the oldest parliament in the world, the Communists have led the Social Democrats consistently since 1945, with the working-class vote split roughly in half between them. In Finland, much the same situation pertains, but with the Social Democrats slightly ahead of the Communists. But these are minor exceptions: in Finland explicable by the divisive effects of the second Russo-Finnish war of 1941-45, and in Iceland probably by resentment against the stationing of foreign (American) troops in the country, both during the war and throughout the cold-war period. The result of the Communist decline has in most cases been to boost the social-democratic vote. This has been of greater importance than might appear at first

sight, for it has in some countries enabled the social democrats to move from *minoritaire* status to the status of a *majoritaire* party within the national polity.

THE TWIN concepts *majoritaire* and *minoritaire* are useful in defining the role of social democracy in any given state, for the difference between the two may be decisive in determining the kind of policy and public stance appropriate to the party. For my purposes, I shall define the terms by calling a party that consistently wins around 40 per cent or more of the national vote, *majoritaire*; and a party that achieves between 15 per cent and 30 per cent of the vote, *minoritaire*. It is clear that a party that wins 40 per cent or more of the vote can rule either outright, as is usually the case in Sweden, Norway, Britain, and Australasia (and in the future, it would seem likely, in Germany and Austria), or by allying itself with a minor party with roughly similar aims—the Free Democrats in West Germany, the Left Democrats in Denmark. A party with *minoritaire* status, on the other hand, will be unable to take part in government without allying itself with a party, or several parties, of roughly similar size. The limitations this imposes may be less rigorous than one might think: the social democrats, even though polling only 20 per cent of the vote, may be able to influence the coalition they enter as effectively as if they were enjoying *majoritaire* status. The countries where this is so are mostly to be found on the borderlands of the Germanic-Latin linguistic frontier. Thus, in Switzerland, the Social Democrats won 26.6 per cent of the vote in 1963, and 23.5 per cent in 1967. In both elections they led both the Catholics and the “Radicals” (i.e., conservatives) by only 1-2 per cent. They were allotted two votes on the nine-man National Council—along with two Catholics, two Radicals, and one Peasant party representative—in Switzerland's permanent coalition. This gives the Social Democrats considerable leverage, and represents a shift in their favor since 1959—in 1943-53 they were represented by one vote; between 1953-59 they were unrepresented in the executive.

The Dutch and Belgian social democrats are in somewhat the same position, since they share the religious and/or linguistic and cultural divisions characteristic of Switzerland. In Holland, often wrongly thought of as a Protestant country, the dominant party is in fact the (Catholic) People's party, whose vote has held steady at around 30 per cent since 1945. It is thus a permanent *minoritaire* party—but occupying a central position which makes it the indispensable linchpin of a national coalition. The Dutch Labor party is in a similar position, trailing the Catholics by only 1-2 per cent in most elections. What is striking here is the remarkable stability

* At random: in Belgium, a decline from 12.7 per cent in 1946 to 3.3 per cent in 1968; in Norway, from 11.9 per cent in 1945 to 1.4 per cent in 1965; in Sweden, from 10.5 per cent in 1944 to 3 per cent in 1968; in Austria, from 5.4 per cent in 1945 to .4 per cent in 1966.

of the vote. Each held within a point or two of 30 per cent of the vote for twenty years after the war; both were *minoritaire* and looked unlikely to make the breakthrough to *majoritaire* status. The reasons for this are complex, being rooted in Holland's religious history; the rest of the vote has been split between two Protestant parties, the Communist party, the Farmers' party, and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (i.e. liberals), none of which has ever achieved more than 13 per cent of the national vote. Since the mid-60's, however, Dutch politics has been in flux, with the rise of the new Farmers' party and of various left-wing groups. Dutch "stability"—the dissidents would call it "stagnation"—may indeed be in the process of being broken down (in 1967, the Catholic vote fell to 26.5 per cent, Labor's to 23.5 per cent). A Christian Democratic movement on the West German or Austrian model (i.e. a Catholic-Protestant coalition), which would produce a *majoritaire* party with about 45 per cent of the vote, has been discussed as a possibility. But this breakthrough to a "German" solution seems most unlikely in view of the historical rigidity of Holland's religious alignments. Most observers feel that, despite a certain restlessness with the present rather antiquated set-up, most Dutchmen are not fundamentally dissatisfied with things as they are.

Developments in Belgium illustrate well both the tendencies making for a *majoritaire* social-democratic or Catholic party, as in the German-speaking countries, and the forces that can emerge to frustrate such an evolution. Thus, in 1946, the Catholic party (PSC) won 42.5 per cent of the national vote; it rose to a peak in 1950 with 47.7 per cent. The PSC, being deeply rooted in Catholic Flanders, had emerged from the war as a dominant, *majoritaire* party rather similar to Austria's Catholic *Volkspartei*. Yet by the early 60's its vote had fallen to 41.7 per cent (1961), and then to 31.7 per cent (1968). The PSC had fallen—to employ the description I have adopted—from *majoritaire* to *minoritaire* status in the course of ten years. Had it lost votes to its social-democratic rival and partner, the PSB? Evidently not, since the PSB vote followed an almost identical upward, and then downward, curve. The Belgian system, then, might be described as a "German" system that somehow failed to come of age—which is what almost every observer would have predicted from the figures ten years ago. The reason for this is to be found in the linguistic and cultural conflicts that have underlain the Belgian social structure since the foundation of the state in 1830. Sixty per cent of Belgians are Dutch-speaking Flemings, 30 per cent are French-speaking Walloons from the South, and the rest live in the much-disputed, but basically "francophone" capital, Brussels. The pattern, of course, is not unlike that of Switzerland. But in

Belgium these conflicts have, in effect, taken precedence over the older religious and social divisions that found expression in the PSC and PSB. One result of this regression has been that the anti-clerical, middle-class Liberals have staged a comeback (21.6 per cent in 1965), mostly in French-speaking Wallonia, and probably at the expense of the social democrats. The openly federalist, if not separatist, Flemish *Volksunie* rose to nearly 10 per cent of the vote in 1968, and their equivalents on the francophone line of battle gathered nearly 6 per cent. The outlook is therefore extremely unclear. Belgium could take a separatist path and split up as a national unit. Again, a Swiss solution could be found which would lead to a permanent, federalized coalition. Or Belgium might swing back to the general West European pattern, should the Catholics and social democrats find a solution to the linguistic and cultural problems that have emerged and which now threaten to engulf them.

Nevertheless, it is hard not to see Belgium as the exception that proves the rule. The rule can be stated simply: in the Catholic countries of Europe the period since the defeat of fascism has seen a gradual polarization of forces, with the Catholics forming the core of a conservative-center party (as in Germany, Austria, Italy, and to a certain extent France), and the working class forming the core of a Communist or social-democratic party (the former in Latin Europe; the latter in Germanic Europe). In the case of the "conservative" parties—only the British Conservatives dare actually to call themselves by that name—it is important to note that all are *majoritaire*. In Catholic Europe, the social democrats are *majoritaire* only in Germany and Austria; elsewhere they are distinctly *minoritaire* and likely to remain so—though not necessarily deprived thereby of influence on national policy. In fact, the social democrats have not done as badly in Latin Europe as is often made out. The Italian socialist vote—ignoring the numerous splittings and regroupings—has remained fairly steady: 20.7 per cent in 1946, 20.6 per cent in 1968.

THE FRENCH socialist vote is more difficult to estimate, thanks to the general political confusion of post-1945 France, and to the difficulty in knowing whether to reckon the Radical-Socialists (who have found an eloquent new performer in Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber) as part of the French labor movement or not. But the four-and-a-half-million votes won by the socialists in 1945—24 per cent of the total—roughly matches the four-and-a-half-million won by the FGDS (the combined Socialists and Radicals) in the traumatic election of June 1968. The socialists must have lost votes to the Gaullists—as did all parties, including the Communists—but they would not appear to have lost much

ground vis-à-vis the "monolithic" French Communist party. A conservative estimate would be that their vote has held at a figure somewhat under 20 per cent. This is a rather better result than is usually allowed the unfortunate French social democrats, whose former name—*Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*—has a somewhat antiquated ring. Whereas they were a million votes short of the Communists in 1945, the FGDS vote in June 1968 was just a little ahead of the Communists—admittedly, in a bad year for the Communists. (The French CP at its peak reached 26 per cent; the Italian CP rose from 19 per cent in 1946 to a new peak of 28 per cent in the regional elections in June of this year. But the party, in 1968, achieved a *national* total of only 27 per cent.) Still, bearing in mind that neither the French nor the Italian Communist party has ever achieved even one-third of the national vote—they have remained, in other words, obstinately *minoritaire*—one must admit that the 20 per cent won by the social democrats in both countries is not at all bad, particularly where it has allowed the social democrats to form a Center-Left alignment, as has been the case in Italy since 1963. The truth is, the imputed "monolithic" strength of the Communist parties in these countries has tended to encourage an overestimation of their actual electoral strength—which averages out, after all, at not much more than one-quarter of the electorate. Conversely, the vagaries of the socialist course in both countries have obscured the fact that they have both held the support of something like one-fifth of the electorate. It follows, further, that on purely *arithmetical* grounds a Popular Front, with 45-50 per cent backing from the electorate, should be feasible in either country. It remains, needless to say, extremely improbable.

WE HAVE observed in the case of Belgium the decline of a social-democratic party from *majoritaire* to *minoritaire* status; in West Germany, the most populous and powerful country in Western Europe, we see exactly the reverse. The importance of Germany in the historical development of social democracy hardly needs emphasis. Before 1914, all social democrats looked to Germany, not only as the original *heimat* of Marx and Engels, but as the country most likely to succeed in achieving true socialism among the nations of the West. As is well known, this belief was held by Lenin and the leading Bolsheviks for some years after the October Revolution, and later still by Trotsky: it was hard for those brought up in the traditions of pre-1914 social democracy, Menshevik or Bolshevik, orthodox or revisionist, not to think of the German SPD as the first-born among social-democratic parties.

We can see, with hindsight, that this view was always somewhat suspect. In his first book, a

study of *German Social Democracy* (1895), Bertrand Russell criticized the German "Marxists" for their over-concentration on problems of political democracy. This criticism rings strangely in modern ears. Yet it is the key to the actual—as opposed to the mythological—history of German social democracy. Marxism was, as Russell noted, the religion, the driving power of German social democracy. But what this meant in practice was that the Revolution (being inevitable) could be left to develop along predestined lines—a remarkably passive attitude, from which Lenin sought to break out by an infusion of Russian elitist populism and a more voluntarist approach. The German Social Democrats, of course, regarded it as their duty to prepare the way for the Revolution by removing political obstacles to their eventual assumption of power. Quite logically, therefore, the SPD was more concerned with democratizing the German polity than with improving the lot of the workingman by industrial action, which is what the young Russell urged them to do. For them the thing to do was to agitate for parliamentary reform, and to wait for the moment when the votes of the impoverished working masses would sweep the Social Democrats into power by legal means, enabling the party to take over the state.

As we well know, none of this was to happen. The SPD had become the largest party in the Reichstag before 1914, and in 1920 was to provide both president and chancellor. During the Weimar Republic the party held its own against the onslaughts of the Communists and the Nazis; but it never became *majoritaire* or looked like doing so. The vote the SPD achieved at its peak in 1928 (29.8 per cent) was not much different from that which it achieved in 1949 (29.2 per cent) or in 1957 (31.8 per cent): the SPD, after its early rapid advance, found it impossible to break out of what later became known as its "30-per-cent fortress"—a fortress which held the enemy at bay, but also confined the SPD itself. The reason for this had, in fact, not much to do with the rise of the Communists to the Left, or of the Nazis to the Right—though it is often falsely assumed that both extremes took working-class votes from the SPD. (The Communists took about 7 per cent of—mostly unemployed—workers after 1930. But the figures show that the SPD held most of its loyalists to the end; and it was the only party to vote against Hitler's Enabling Act in 1933. It was the bourgeois parties that crumbled before the Nazi onslaught.)

The real weakness of the SPD is a good deal clearer now that we are able to see it in the perspective of developments in the years after 1945. On the one hand, a third of Germany was Catholic, and this prevented the SPD from drawing on those Catholic working-class or peasant voters that it needed to bring it closer to the

40-per-cent mark. On the other, its "Marxist" ideology, while of little use to the party in running the affairs of the nation, prevented any breakthrough into the preserve of the bourgeois parties—something that only began to happen in the 1960's. The successes of the SPD since the Bad Godesberg conference of 1959, when the SPD went formally revisionist, are often put down to the explicit abandonment of Marxism at that conference. But I would agree with George Lichtheim's conclusion in his *A Short History of Socialism** that if the SPD shed its Marxism without too much difficulty in the 50's, this was partly because the SPD had never been anything like as Marxist as it constantly—to its own detriment—proclaimed. The majority of the SPD, in other words, was not only "revisionist" long before Bernstein, but never was any other kind of animal.

WHAT EMERGES, then, is that the conventional distinction between socialism of the German or Austro-Marxist variety and that which grew up in Scandinavia and the Anglo-Saxon countries is highly dubious. The Marxist parties of Central Europe were not as Marxist as their enemies (and some of their friends) supposed; but, equally, the other parties were not as immune from ideological in-fighting as is often imagined. Ironically, it was shortly after the SPD finally jettisoned its Marxism in 1959 that the most furious of ideological struggles broke out in the "empirical" British Labour party. After the defeat of 1959, Hugh Gaitskell challenged the party to strike out the notorious "Clause 4" of the Labour party's constitution (drafted by Sidney Webb in 1920), which committed the party to the socialization of the "means of production, distribution, and exchange." The Left fought back on this amendment and on the issue of unilateral disarmament with the support of Frank Cousins, leader of the powerful Transport and General Workers Union. The result was a victory for Gaitskell, at the 1961 conference, on unilateral disarmament; but on the amendment of Clause 4 he was compelled to yield. Yet, looking back from even ten years' distance, one is hard put to see how the controversy could ever have assumed such proportions as almost to tear the Labour party apart. It proved to be almost totally irrelevant to the practice of the Labour government of 1964-70 under Harold Wilson (though steel was re-nationalized), and one doubts whether Gaitskell, had he lived, would have steered a different course. But it is not without irony that the last great "ideological" controversy within a major social-democratic party should have taken place, not among the supposedly dogmatic Germans or Austrians, but among the Fabian, empirical British.

It would be wrong, certainly, to push the comparison between the SPD and British Labour too far—after all, if the SPD had attended to its "image" in the 20's it is arguable that a strong, *majoritaire* SPD might have emerged and the Weimar Republic been saved. But since the emphasis is nearly always placed on the differences and not on the resemblances between the two major social-democratic parties of the West, it is important to redress the balance somewhat. One might argue, for example, that the Fabian dogma which underlay Labour's "ideology"—such as it was—is open to much the same objection as that made by the young Bertrand Russell against the German parties' Marxism. Fabian dogma also encouraged a passive approach: it was only necessary for socialists to wait until the combined power of the working-class vote and of Fabian infiltration of the state machine—a curious parallel with Leninism—had given socialists control of the organs of state. Time would see to that. Meanwhile, socialists must continue with the good work of proselytization and organization: on the Day, the ripe fruit must fall into their lap.

This attitude of mind would seem to resemble that described by Russell rather closely. If it differed from German Marxism, it was in a somewhat greater tendency toward voluntarism and elitism. It has surprised and shocked many good social democrats that the Webbs in later life became admirers of Stalin, and Shaw of both Stalin and Mussolini. But on the view I have put forward it is not really so surprising. Fabianism, from its early days, possessed an inherent tendency toward authoritarianism and *étatisme*—most of the Fabians were not pro-Boers, like the Liberal Lloyd George, but frank supporters of British imperialism. There is not much doubt that the "Marxist" SPD was at root more concerned with political democracy ("too democratic," said Russell) than the Fabians—though one must allow for the fact that the British already possessed a large degree of democracy, while the Germans did not.

The actual political progress of both parties supports the view that they have rather more in common than is often supposed. Neither party, in the inter-war period, was *majoritaire*—though both formed minority governments or entered coalitions. In the postwar period, Labour became *majoritaire* in 1945, winning 47.8 per cent of the vote. In terms of parliamentary seats this produced a landslide majority under the British system (though in 1951, when the party did still better with a popular vote of 48.8 per cent, it lost narrowly in terms of parliamentary seats). In the 50's the Labour vote fell slowly to 43.8 per cent in 1959; but it had picked up sufficiently by 1964 to give Harold Wilson a very close majority in the House of Commons. Two years later Harold Wilson led the party to a decisive vic-

* Praeger, 360 pp., \$8.95. (\$3.95 in paperback).

tory (47.9 per cent of the vote; 57.6 per cent of the seats). In May of this year, the pundits and pollsters were predicting a third win for Harold Wilson. It was not to be. But the actual vote, though slightly worse than 1959 (and indeed the lowest since the war), would not in most countries be considered disastrous (43 per cent against the Conservatives' 46.4 per cent, producing a 30-seat majority for the latter in the House of Commons). The comparison with Germany is worth making—though the British seldom make it themselves—because it reveals the underlying strength of the Labour movement, despite an apparently catastrophic and totally unexpected reverse. After all, at 42.7 per cent the SPD was able last year to form its first postwar government in coalition with the small Free Democrat party.

The figures I have given suggest that the level of popular support for the two major social-democratic parties of the West is almost equal at this moment of time. This support is still short of that enjoyed by the Israeli, Norwegian, Austrian, or Swedish parties, but it is well ahead of the *minoritaire* socialist parties of the rest of Europe and Canada (in Canada, the New Democratic party has won 17.3 per cent of the national vote and, in Manitoba, proudly provides the only socialist government in North America). The SPD has had to fight hard to achieve this level of support, as the record shows. Until the early 60's its share of the popular vote was almost static. Only at the 1961 Federal elections did the SPD begin to break out of the "30-per-cent fortress"—it won 36.2 per cent of the vote. This was followed, in the "Erhard election" of 1965, by a lift to 39.3 per cent, and a further 3-per-cent increase brought the party to 42.7 per cent in September of last year. The reason usually given, of course, is the "revisionist" Bad Godesberg conference of 1959. Personally, I think this places too great an emphasis on an ostensibly ideological problem—the shedding of the Marxist integument. There were probably several factors at work: the decline of cold-war fever in West Germany, the increasing appeal of the SPD to younger voters, the lessening hostility of the Church under Pope John, the deliberate espousal of a bi-partisan foreign policy by the SPD's master-strategist, Herbert Wehner, in June 1960. Perhaps the most significant statistic of all is the estimated increase in the urban working class—implying a decline in the rural vote—from 71 per cent to 81 per cent of the total population. All these factors permitted the SPD for the first time to make inroads into Catholic and bourgeois support. An equally potent factor was the leadership crisis into which the Christian Democrats were thrown by the decline of Adenauer's authority after 1959, his departure as Chancellor in 1963, and as Chairman in 1966. The CDU had been, above all things, the "*Adenauer-Partei*"; and with his disappearance, the "mono-

lithic" qualities of the better-organized SPD began to tell in its favor, while the CDU fell victim to the factionalism inherent in its make-up.

WHAT IS the further prospect, for British Labour and for the German SPD? Any answer to this question can only be hypothetical. Yet its importance for Europe and the world at large is evident. If Britain and Germany and Scandinavia are evolving in the direction of predominantly social-democratic politics, this will not be without effect on the rest of Europe and (most of all, I think) on the Third World. (Its effects on the Communist world are probably two-way: social democracy may increase the revisionist tendencies in Eastern Europe; on the other hand, the Soviet Union will continue to regard these tendencies with the greatest suspicion, doubtless resorting to violence once again should a Czechoslovak situation recur.) Most German observers would argue that the growth of the SPD over the past decade has been so steady and predictable that a further increase of around 3 per cent in 1973 and 1977 cannot be ruled out. This would, of course, make the SPD the permanent majority party in the Federal Republic: the "Wehner strategy" would have triumphed. And indeed, if one is prepared to put one's faith in the sociologists, this would seem a safe prediction. It is quite clear that the SPD's 3 per cent gain in 1969 occurred at the expense of the Christian Democrats, and can be roughly defined as a lower-white-collar vote—a vote by the "*angestellten*" from industry, the civil service, and the service sector of West German society, who are no longer frightened by the "anti-bourgeois" reputation of the SPD.

However, there remains the problem of the Free Democrat party, at present allied with the SPD in government. Should this party disappear during the 70's—which is quite likely—it seems reasonable to assume that its vote would be almost equally divided between the two major parties. This eventuality would on the whole benefit the CDU and give the party a slight edge over the SPD.

On the whole, then, the outlook for the SPD in the 70's must be considered moderate-to-good, especially since the CDU has not yet been able—and may find it very difficult—to settle on a prospective candidate for the chancellorship. The advantage the CDU possessed in the 50's in being the *Adenauer-Partei* would seem to have passed to the SPD, the *Brandt-Partei*. On the other hand, the Brandt image may come unstuck if the *Ostpolitik* does not work out, or if the SPD's new economic magician, Professor Schiller, fails to pull the right rabbits out of the right hats.

In Britain, the situation is still unclear. There has been no great stocktaking since Labour's defeat, and in its present mood the party clearly intends to avoid one—to avert a repetition of the

disastrous in-fighting of the 1951-61 period. The truth is, nobody can say for certain why the Tories won the June 1970 election; and it is, perhaps, for the democratic political analyst, a suitably humbling thought that he can never know for certain why things turned out as they did in any secret-ballot election. The best guess, in my view, is the simplest: the British had had enough of the "squeezes and freezes" they experienced between 1966 and 1969. Roy Jenkins's leading of the economy on to more pleasant paths over the past year (though even that achievement is now in doubt) did not cancel out the memory of frozen wages and savage taxation. It would seem fairly clear that the white-collar and intelligentsia elements that voted Labour in 1966 returned to their Tory allegiance in 1970—though Powellism may have swung working-class votes to the Right in certain limited areas. But the basic outlook, once the shock has been absorbed, is by no means pessimistic. There is no reason to think there exists any long-term trend against Labour in the country at large; and the Tory hold on Parliament could easily be weakened by the loss of half-a-dozen by-elections (15 losses would suffice to bring down the government). What Harold Wilson set out to achieve in 1964 was to demonstrate that the Labour party was a party of government. One can say that he achieved this goal. His team—in particular Callaghan, Healey, and Jenkins—is widely respected; and he probably made a grave mistake in not exploiting this fact during the campaign. Much is still unclear, because the Tories have not so far shown their hand sufficiently. Certainly, at the moment, this does not look like a revolutionary government, or even a particularly strong one. A cautious estimate would be that Labour has at least a fifty-fifty chance of winning the next election, and of improving its position at the Borough and County levels in the meantime.

SO FAR, I have dealt largely in facts and figures and left theory to one side. I have done so in the belief that the political content of the process I have attempted to describe (and it is a highly complex phenomenon) is essentially implicit in these facts and figures. What is that content? At the beginning of this article I put forward a proposition: in "Germanic" Europe, social-democratic ideas—the welfare state, economic interventionism, a trend toward educational, social, and economic egalitarianism—have to a great extent permeated society and found expression in parties whose existence is a *sine qua non* of the balanced health of the national polity. In "Latin Europe" the situation is somewhat different: whereas the former statement would pass—that society has been to a large extent permeated by social-democratic ideas—the latter clearly would not. The presence of strong

Communist parties has encouraged the emergence of over-dominant right-wing parties and limited the freedom of movement of social democracy. But is it begging the question to claim that social-democratic or socialist ideas have permeated society? What, *pace* Mr. Lichtheim (who sees none anywhere), does socialism consist of? Is it permissible to use the word, as Mr. Lichtheim does in his *Short History*, in such a way that the great majority of the social-democratic parties I have analyzed must be dismissed as "laborist," and the term socialism reserved for some never-quite-defined future condition to which these parties may or may not be aspiring, but have certainly not yet achieved?

With all respect to Mr. Lichtheim's excellent primer, such a definition seems to me unacceptable. That "socialism" is at one and the same time a desirable and unattainable ideal I would allow only in the sense that this proposition is also true of the "Kingdom of Heaven" or the "City of God." But this does not dispose of the claim of certain parties to be "socialist" any more than the fallen state of mankind disallows certain organizations from claiming the title of "Christian." Mr. Lichtheim argues that a proposition such as Professor Arthur Lewis's—"Socialism is not, in the first instance, about property any more than it is about the state. Socialism is about equality. A passion for equality is one thing that links all Socialists; on all others they are divided"—is inadequate in that it ignores the "historic aims of the labor movement," and could be applied equally to other radical movements. Elsewhere, Mr. Lichtheim insists on the paternity of the Enlightenment in the conception of the "historic aims of the labor movement"—whether mediated through Hegel to Karl Marx, or through J. S. Mill and the English positivists to the early Fabian society. Socialism, he goes on, was essentially "a civilizing influence." Seen in this perspective, socialism cannot rest on any one principle (egalitarianism, socialization, dictatorship of the proletariat). It is a historical phenomenon, a broad stream of concepts and ideals that flow from the Enlightenment and from Judaism and Christianity. Thus, to give one example, socialism may not stand or fall by the position any given party takes on women's emancipation (or, to be modish, "liberation"). On the other hand, the concept of the equal treatment of women is certainly "a civilizing influence," and one that has its roots both in Judeo-Christianity and in the Enlightenment. It is also a historical fact that the social-democratic parties I have described *have* consistently espoused this cause—that it is, indeed, one of the "historic aims of the labor movement." In other words, while it is not a sufficient definition of socialism, it would be hard to concede the title of socialist to any party that did not include among its aims the realization of this ideal.

WHAT I AM pointing to, then, is a multiple and essentially historical definition of socialism. Socialism is indeed something different from "laborism"; but, equally, socialism cannot be divorced from the concrete development of the historical process. The evidence I have presented of the inherent and almost certainly growing strength of the labor movement in Western Europe—and, to some extent, outside Europe—is therefore relevant to any understanding of socialism in our own time and in the decades that lie ahead. What one sees when one looks at Europe today (and especially at "Germanic" Europe) is a political scene from which the twin specters of Fascism and Communism have vanished, and in which the forces of "reaction" (the Churches, Roman or Reformed, or British-type Conservatism) have been to a large extent tamed. It is plain, for example, that none of the leading right-wing parties in Europe is "right-wing" in the pre-war sense of that term (i.e. anti-Semitic, corporatist, ultramontane). Central to this transformation of the scene is the power of the organized working class, for it is its "countervailing power"—to use John Strachey's phrase—which has falsified Marxist predictions as to the progressive impoverishment of the proletariat, and indeed brought within sight the abolition of poverty and those related ills classically described in Engels's *Condition of the Laboring Classes in England*. To put it another way, the labor movement has succeeded in "civilizing" capitalist society; although it has not abolished it, it has rendered such a society *tolerable*. Equally, the labor movement has come to see that certain of its original goals—nationalization, and total control of the state machinery—are capable of perversion into new instruments of tyranny; and it has recoiled at what it has seen. Thus, though social democracy has not yet had the opportunity to tame Communism (though that may be happening in Italy, and was beginning to happen in Czechoslovakia), there is no doubt that Communism has had an educative effect on social democracy. Once again, social democracy may be credited with having exerted a "civilizing influence" in recognizing this painful perversion of some of its earlier ideals, and drawing the appropriate lessons. Much the same could be said, I think, of the New Left influences that have sprouted in Europe since the mid-60's. While some New Left ideals have been recognized and even appropriated (for example, in Olof Palme's Sweden), the essentially regressive elements—neo-Trotskyism, neo-Bakuninism, or Maoism—have been firmly rejected. Indeed, I have felt entitled to exclude a discussion of the New Left in Europe for this reason: I can find no evidence that the much-publicized violence on the streets or the campuses has altered Europe's political patterns either way.

Does this present too complacent a picture? As

a British socialist, I certainly do not feel complacent about the fortunes of the British Labour party. Labour will have a hard fight to regain the power without which its historic ideals are so much hot air (and hot air is what we had from Mr. Wilson during the election campaign, and what helped to lose it). But the overall picture gives no ground for pessimism. It is clear from the figures I have given that social democracy in most of Europe is growing in electoral strength, and it seems reasonable to predict not only that social democrats will in time come to dominate a Common Market founded by their political opponents, but also that this turning of the tide will find its reflection in the countries of the Third World, especially in those which have had past ties with countries with a strong social-democratic tradition. If the Common Market Six become the Common Market Ten—as most European social democrats fervently hope they will—the influence of the European community is likely to spread to the countries in association with it, especially in Africa, but later possibly in large areas of Asia and Latin America. As to the United States, I do not feel competent to make a prediction: my own guess—and it is no more—is that America is in for a longish period of intellectual, if not physical, isolationism—that European, or even Canadian, Australasian, or British experience is not going to make much impact.

Certainly it would be question-begging and premature to present social democracy—as was popular in the immediate postwar years—as some kind of Third Force on the world scene. If Europe were to achieve complete political integration, it is perhaps possible to argue that she would one day rank as a power-grouping with America, the Soviet Union, and emergent China. This is not the place to go into the likelihood of such an eventuality. But as "a civilizing influence" I believe that social democracy will play an increasingly important role in the world, possibly in inverse proportion to the image and impact of the United States. To American ears, this judgment may sound not merely complacent, but arrogantly blind to the kind of problems America (but also the rest of us) will have to face in the coming decades. Nevertheless, I believe it to be a realistic assessment. And to the charge of complacency I would counter that the definition of socialism I have offered—neither a disembodied ideal nor crudely "laborist"—is of its nature complacency-proof. Socialism, as I have defined it, is essentially historical, essentially open-ended. It will never quite be achieved; but it will be achieved in some measure, step by step, by the intelligent use of the power vested in social democracy as an alliance of the working class and the progressive middle class and intelligentsia. The City of God is not to be taken by storm; but not to strive after it is to commit mortal sin.

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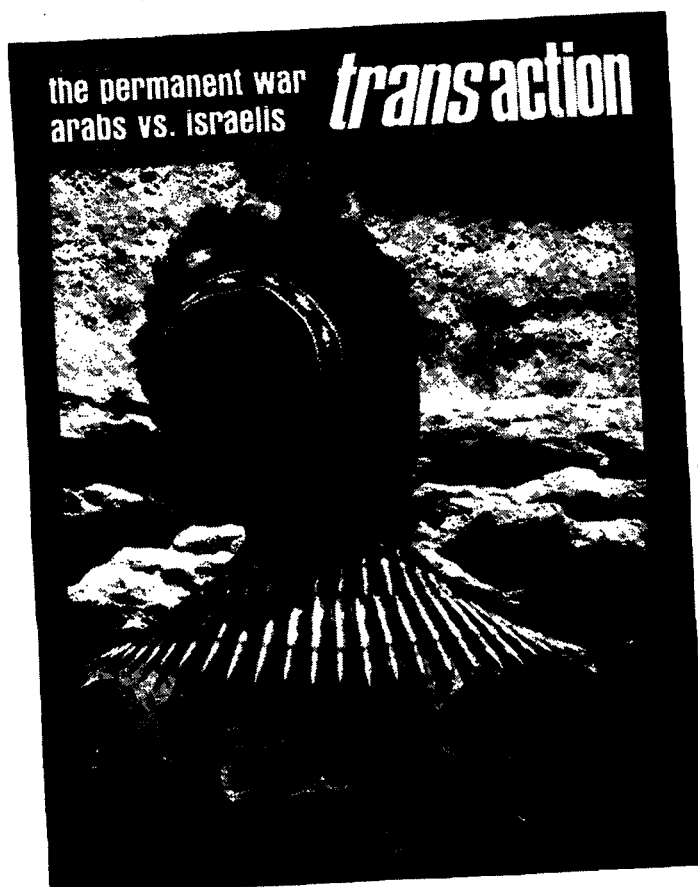
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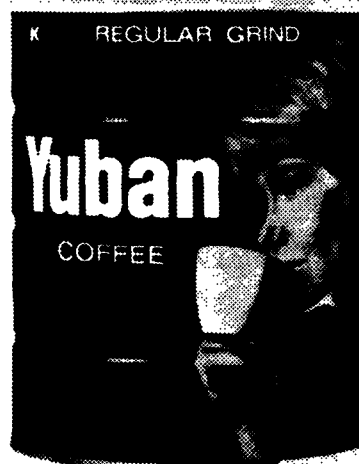
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The Traveler and His Telling

A Story

E. M. Broner

THEY SAT next to each other with only the coffee table and the large speckled ceramic ashtray that rested on the wedge-shaped table separating them. He, the patient, was six foot three, some six inches taller than his doctor. That difference was a sensitive figure—the size of a manikin. The doctor never stood when the patient was in the room. He was seated when the patient arrived and he nodded good-bye from his chair after their session.

The patient had long soft hair, not as long as his son's, but thinner, hence softer, and he had long, graying sideburns. The doctor had begun their treatment sessions with a crew cut, of all things! He had a good-boy look: apple-cheeked, a non-dandruffed pink scalp, starched white shirts, thin ties. After ten months the patient opened the door of the treatment room to find his doctor in a turtleneck. The patient felt vaguely betrayed, as if they had *traded* places, but it was a mock-turtleneck, not meant to be bulky. This comforted the patient. In another four months the doctor had begun wearing soft shoes. Today the doctor returned after a ten-day vacation.

"In Mexico," his doctor had answered after a moment's hesitation. One cannot tell the patient everything. The patient had insisted. Disappearance was all right if the doctor turned up someplace else. The patient had learned all about disappearance from his son, from his turtlenecked, head-in-shell son. Reappearance had therefore become important to the patient. He had even begun to read literature on reincarnation. Continuum he intended; Passover this year was not to be passed over. His doctor was not the only one who had returned; his son was back.

"The more one tells of the departure from Egypt, the more is he to be praised," he told his son, asking him to stay for the Seders. He reminded the son, "I personally came out of Egypt," but the patient was nearer to Exodus than the son. The patient's parents had not sailed on the Good Ship Exodus, but into New York harbor and he, first generation, had raised his hand with all the others in his classroom

when asked by the third-generation American teacher if their parents had been born in Europe. He, unlike his son, was raised on radio and on the Lone Ranger. Although he was tall, his parents lovingly thought of him as Andy Hardy, like the short, manic Mickey Rooney. He went through childhood hating the Dionne Quintuplets and Shirley Temple and Shirley's Good Ship Lollipop when his mother tried to Americanize him into tap-dancing lessons with the fat girls above the Eastern Market, on the second floor, next to his dentist's office. He could feel the vibrations from those fat tappers even under the dentist's drill.

The patient opened the door. The humidifier was on, buzzing noisily. The blinds were down, slits of light webbing the twin chairs. Stains from snow and slush had been washed, during the doctor's absence, from the carpeting. All this at a glance. Second glance from matching chair—the doctor's long sideburns, not gray as the patient's, but curved up from the jaw line toward the lips, as if anticipating a long moustache. The turtleneck was worn with a Mexican silver chain hanging from the mock neck. The doctor's hair was collar length and itching him. He did not scratch but rubbed with his knuckles where it was growing in.

The patient felt fatherly and moved. He decided to share more than appearance. Upon entering he mentioned the name of R. D. Laing. The doctor had not heard of him but was open and modest and wrote down the name. He asked the patient to write down the title of the book. *The Divided Self*, wrote the patient, underlining the title as in the MLA style sheet. The world was being influenced by him. He had caused his doctor to become less starchy and had introduced him to a radical existential psychoanalyst. His influence would pass on to other patients. A good morning's work.

After the appointment the patient parked his car near the Woodward Avenue bus line. He read the ecology literature his son had sent home. He neither used—nor allowed to be used—detergents or enzyme breakers; he bought non-return bottles; he neither procreated nor took his car downtown. He stopped smoking. In a few months the tobacco stain left his second and third fingers, and teeth, and, hopefully, his lungs. His son had

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told him what to do and he, obedient father, had done it, paraphrasing the Haggadah: "and thou shalt tell thy father on that day." Only it was his son who was his Egyptian and caused his affliction.

At the bus stop in the ghetto neighborhood he wavered between pessimism and optimism. He was a waverer—he would tentatively gesture out to the world, then withdraw that wave of recognition. He hunched at his bus stop against the spring wind and the surrounding riot area. Stores were still boarded from three years before, rubble not cleaned away, or an area was razed clean and left that way, frozen in winter, muddy in spring.

Waiting the twenty minutes for the bus, he studied this area near the Expressway, for it was also the dumping ground for towed cars that had been in accidents. All accidental autos found their way to the side streets of the ghetto—all unrepairables, with smashed windshields, hoods crumpled and petaled like flowers, fenders not fending off.

Our waste. We must campaign against our refuse. He had started several campaigns in his suburb. One, the most lasting, had been the PAP party, People Are Precious. Through the mimeographed newsletter he fought battles. (1) Write to a Friend battle. He was against the phone since his son had written him about the telephone tax going solely for the war. He did not want to encourage excessive use of that means of communication. Return to Correspondence. (2) Curb the Use of Water. At the first leak in his faucet he called in his plumber the past weekend. (3) Recirculate, Re-Use. PAP was against the shiny new. The used was handled and therefore more valuable. Re-use envelopes, containers, the backs of letters. It makes for continuum.

He took his editorial policy seriously. He was an example. As, for instance, with the plumber. The man came, short, muscular, cigar, and Jewish.

"Why should my son fight?" asked the plumber. "I fought in World War II. I should fight. To be a soldier means to protect yourself. He's nineteen, and he's a dummy. It takes until you're twenty-two to know how to protect yourself."

The plumber refused coffee. The patient wondered if he, the host, had learned to protect himself before or after twenty-two.

"I'll fight for my son," said the plumber. "I know how to fight." The plumber refused eggs and toast. "But I keep out of it. I remove. I'll fix pipes and let the nation's plumbing leak. I don't care; I won't repair. You voted for Nixon, I tell my friends when they complain about the cost of living, the cost of building, the cost of buying. You wanted him. I didn't want him. Now everything is in disrepair."

The patient was in despair. The effects of the appointment usually lasted a couple of days, until the next visit, except on the weekend when

he had to get through Sunday. But now, ten minutes later and already in despair. An old woman approached him. PEOPLE ARE PRECIOUS. Lipstick smeared on the left corner of her mouth. Rouge on the white, white flesh, the pores darkened at the spots of rouge. Sunken eyes. Old coat, matted fur collar. SOME PEOPLE ARE PRECIOUS.

"How are you?" she grinned at him, for he was another white (only not so pale as she) in that neighborhood.

"Do you get robbed here, too?" she asked.

"Never," he told her indignantly. She was merely another prejudiced person.

"Ahhh," she said. "Everything is stolen. Once the lobby of our building had grillwork, mahogany table, lovely lamps, fringed shades, a huge planter next to the fireplace, candlesticks with imitation candles, and light bulbs shaped like flames. It was all stolen, even the grillwork on the doors. Now we have a kitchen table in the lobby."

He could see she was not proud to walk across that lobby. He was attentive. Detail, he always told his high-school classes. In your themes, put detail. The bus came. He sat next to her. He wanted more detail.

"I'm eighty," she told him, "and I can't move away. My doctor won't travel far to me. He can't get around like he used to, now that he's an elderly gentleman of seventy. I used to be a nurse. I worked for doctors—all the big Jewish doctors when they had clinics here, before they moved—Green, Glassgold, Kirschbaum, Meyers, Soloveichik, Bernstein—he died of a bleeding ulcer—Rich. Do you know," she said, "I can do everything. Cook, sew. I cook home-made noodles and matzoh balls that are like clouds on my soup. I'm not Jewish but I like matzoh balls."

THE PATIENT was beginning to feel superfluous to the world. Where was his influence? Not on his son, not on his plumber, not on the old woman—they all flowed over him, drowning him in word and deed—ah, yes, on the sideburns of his doctor.

"What do you do?" she asked him. She had to ask it twice. Usually he answered right away.

"English?" she said, her eyes turning away, but then, even staring straight at him she seemed to be looking past him. "I'm German."

She had no accent.

"My father's nephew knew Herbert Hoover when he came over after World War I. My father's nephew was an engineer, too, like Hoover. We gave a ball—I danced with Herbert Hoover."

She giggled. Was she senile? Should she be dismissed?

"Detail is harder to dismiss than abstractions and generalities," he had told the tenth-graders.

"I need a new coat," she told him suddenly (had the ball and the floor-length gowns reminded her?). "The social worker came. I told

her about the coat. 'Have you any money?' she asked me. 'Yes,' I said. 'Where?' she asked. I went to my jar, the kind I keep my noodles in in the refrigerator. I had saved a little money there by traveling all the way out to Hamtramck to get my groceries. I took the cold jar out of the refrigerator and showed her. She took my money. She left the jar. That wasn't nice. That wasn't very nice." She was whining. It was his stop. He had stopped listening to her.

"The world cries out with its innumerable trials and horrors—the betrayal of human life, made cheap and stripped of its dignity, in every nation. The very nature of the human mind forces us to limit our interests and compassion, or else we drown in their diffusion and our own extreme pain." This was Robert Coles in *Children of Crisis*. He had given a mimeographed copy of the quotation to his doctor and to his mailing list in his People Are Precious party.

"But what does this mean to you?" the doctor had asked, as expected. *He* couldn't take anything as having its own intrinsic value.

The bus stopped in front of crowds at his school. The whole school, out on the pavements. Fire bells were ringing, air-raid sirens wailing, squad cars honking. The German woman looked out of the window, smiling with interest. A bomb threat. He pushed inside. The metal mail boxes of the faculty were being systematically opened and slammed. He looked in his. A notice from a catering service nearby.

"It was an anonymous phone call," the plain-clothesman told him. "Better evacuate."

The halls had already been made into a vacuum. He exited. He exodused. (Although it was a noun, not a verb.)

Back on the same bus line, without the German lady, going to his car and the suburb from whence precious people emanated.

His son was asleep. His wife was moving dishes to the basement, taking the Passover dishes upstairs. He heard the dishwasher. She was doing her silverware in the machine with a stone to purify it. He laughed. A stone purified. And what purified the German woman, an enemy in World War I—dancing with Herbert Hoover and working for Jewish doctors? It was Hoover who became the enemy.

"A chicken in every pot," he had once quoted to his son.

"Pot in every chicken," his son now quoted to him.

The upstairs bedroom door opened. Out came the odor of incense, and his son.

"Coffee?" asked the father, as he had offered the plumber. The son refused.

"Familia," said the son, "Organic cereal. We use it at the commune."

The son lectured a long time to the patient/father on organic foods.

"That's very educational," said the father.

The slippery son. He had gone through all the stages when he had asked the Questions. He passed through them in reverse, first not knowing how to ask, then asking simply with much prodding from his parents and his grandparents.

("Immigrants," the grandson's social-studies book was to tell him, "came to this land for freedom and brought with them certain crafts, such as leather-making." He was shocked and ashamed to learn that he was the grandchild of immigrants. "But they don't work with leather," he said. He became alien in that household, so far removed from exodus that he had to make his own.)

After the simple-dimpled son came Hebrew school and the wise son, gesturing dramatically at the Seder plate. It was high drama and comedy, with the stealing of the matzoh and the selling of it back. His grandparents had come already with the presents, none of which he would have demanded—like new MEDIUM HARD toothbrushes, real-bristle hairbrushes, stretch socks. The wise son became wiser, after his Bar Mitzvah, expanding on the meaning of the Seder, comparing the translations of several Haggadahs while parents and grandparents let him speak uninterrupted. He was, thus, not used to being interrupted, explained his father to the son's junior-high teachers, and that probably accounted for the talking which was marked on his Conduct/Citizenship record.

This had gone on uninterruptedly, like a peace that lulls the land, until the son became the wicked son and excluded himself, denying the group principle. Passover came and there was no youngest to ask, for the youngest was in exile, and the father would ask hurriedly while the grandmother wiped her eyes and his wife clattered suddenly the plates she was preparing in the kitchen.

THE GRANDPARENTS rang the bell. They had come over to visit the visitor. The son spoke uninterruptedly about *I Ching*. He told them of another commandment, "Do not ye judge, for judgment causes fear." He told them that they were all part of the same Godhead (at which the son's grandfather did not know whether to nod or shake his own head), and how, in reincarnating, the son had discovered that he was as much Chinese as Jewish.

"How so?" the grandfather had asked.

The father had learned his own patience from his scholarly father, although he had never acquired the perception and depth of his own father. And was his son more or less perceptive than he? Deeper or shallower?

"I was in the court of Genghis Khan," said the son.

The grandfather looked mildly startled. The grandmother and mother clutched their hearts.

"Why that court?" the grandfather asked gently. "It was such an oppressive court, so barbaric."

The grandson was annoyed.

"Tell me," the grandfather asked. "Don't you belong to a family, a nation of people, a country, a world?"

The son tilted back the dining-room chair. His mother wanted to stop him because the chairs were old and loosening, but her husband gestured her not to interrupt.

"No," said the son. "I am of the family of man. I am not Jewish. You are not my parents. You are not my grandparents."

"Then why did you visit?" the father asked. "Why did you come home to us?"

"Just to see some old people," said the son. "Just to try this trip again. Before I left."

"Where to?" grandmother/mother.

"Another trip. How can I tell before I make it?"

"Tell me," said the father or grandfather. It was hard in recalling to decide who the questioner was, for they were suddenly themselves sons who were too simple to ask questions, who did not know the questions to ask before this traveler and his own telling.

"Tell me, what do you mean we are not your relatives? You are always your father's son and your mother's son."

It was the grandfather, then, who asked the question.

"Wherever your travels will take you, you'll find no other parents. . . . What are you searching for?"

"My real self," said the son.

"But you've had that all along," said the grandfather. He leaned on the dining-room table that would soon be the Seder table. The sunlight was of earliest spring. One day snow. One day not. Even an eclipse this year. At a former eclipse, several years ago, the young son and his father had charted the path of a lima-bean rim of light which narrowed as the moon moved across the sun.

"Remember the eclipse in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*?" the grandfather asked his son. "Remember Will Rogers in the movie?"

This new eclipse was not charted. No one cared about moons obscuring suns or the darkness that descended upon the earth.

"That's right," said the grandmother. "You take your real self with you wherever you go."

The grandson laughed. "If that's your trip—"

"Like Shirley Temple," said the grandmother, "in *The Blue Bird*. She was a big girl already when she made that movie, maybe too big—and how she went looking all over for the blue bird of happiness only to find it in her own back yard. Look at your nice back yard—"

"The city says the elm tree is blighted," the father said to the grandfather. "They're charging me three hundred and forty dollars to cut it down."

"You can't win," said the mother.

"I belong equally to all things," said the son. "I talk to willow trees."

"What do they say back?" the grandfather giggled. The grandmother jabbed him. The grandson was talking.

"I have talked to the great men of all times. This will interest you. I spoke to Einstein."

"What did he say?" asked the irrepressible grandfather, " $E=MC^2$?"

"He showed it to me," said the grandson. "In one reincarnation, when I dropped acid, I spoke Sanskrit. In another I talked in my sleep. My girl took it down."

"His girl?" the grandmother asked the mother. The mother sighed upward, like blowing smoke from a cigarette.

"My girl showed it to a friend who is a linguist. 'Why that's ancient Hebrew,' said the friend."

The father couldn't help it. "So all those nights of United Hebrew School amounted to something."

The son slammed the chair back on its four weakening legs and left the table.

The women chastised the men. "You shouldn't have offended him. How can we have an influence if you do?"

THE SON was in the living room. He had put on *Abbey Road*. He had set up a little metal-pagoda incense burner to change the sweet smell of his cigarette. The Beatles sang: "Because the world is round, it turns me on/ Because the wind is high, it blows my mind."

The family followed the son.

"Don't talk," said the son. "Your words are meaningless."

So they sat until the women returned to the kitchen, whispering.

"There was a bomb scare in the school today," the father told the grandfather.

"Honestly?" Shock.

"SHH!" said the son. He turned up the Beatles. Full force. Stereo. Both ears attacked. Both men attacked. But the men were stubborn. He had left them so many times, they would not leave him.

"Probably one of my students who didn't have his theme ready," said the father, making light of the bomb scare, so his own father's years would be long in the land. "They were supposed to write on the eclipse—'What in Your Life Has Been Eclipsed?'"

"Very good topic," said the grandfather.

"School," said the son, "turning out Remco plastic toys."

"If we don't learn," said the father, "then we are animals."

"There's nothing wrong with animals," said the grandson. "Animals are together. People are apart."

Ninety dollars a week to be together, the father paid and took a Saturday job selling shoes at Wonderland suburban mall. He also made an income-tax partnership with a friend in the math department at the high school where they'd make themselves a couple of thousand for the season.

"It reduces us when we belong," said the son. "Belonging is an old hang-up. The thing is to exchange and to be free. In our commune all the nursing mothers exchange babies."

"*Nisht gutkeit*," said the grandmother.

"You heard of wet nurses," the grandfather chastised her. "It's the same thing."

"I like dry nurses better," said the grandmother.

The son speaks, the only son, the only grandson, the one for whom there should be a sign upon the frontlets in the morning, upon the post of the house.

"We are objects to each other," said the grandson, "like trees and the sky. My father is an 'it.' *It* woke me up this morning. *It* tells me to eat my breakfast. *It* tells me to change my ways. When *it* speaks I hear the branches swish on the willow tree in our commune, only the willow is more accepting and says things that really blow my mind. But *it* hurts my head."

The father left the room. He was crying. Onto his knuckles tears fell. He ran the faucet to wash the knuckles and to cool the face. He turned Cold onto his wrists.

His son now had to depersonalize, he who had been such a personality, Little Mozart at the piano, a learned scholar at the Torah, the heir to the expectations. He had even inherited a bachelor flutist uncle's flute library and took lessons from the first flutist of the symphony. The grandson had eclipsed the father and the father's own father had, with scholarship and sweetness, eclipsed his offspring. Somewhere sun and moon and earth had combined and he was overshadowed.

The father sat on the toilet lid. His son could be a case in Dr. Laing's *The Divided Self*, someone needing to depersonalize the world, to make an object of those who objected to him, with mysticism and magic until the real world became unreal and the unreal world had talking willows. His son was sick, maybe a schizophrenic. He would ask his doctor. They would restore order to the garden, illumination to the world.

The father came out of the bathroom. His parents had waited to tell him good-bye. They were going home.

"Take me, take me along," he wanted to say. "I'll sit quietly in your kitchen. I won't bother you. I'll drink tea and wash my cup out after-

wards. And I'll grind the lemon slice down the garbage disposal."

"Thank you for coming," he said.

The grandson said nothing.

His wife whispered to him from the kitchen. He sat with her and put sugar into his coffee—he didn't even bother reaching for the saccharine on the counter. He had stopped jogging in the morning since his son's visit. Their voices rose, and his wife began to wail.

"Don't talk!" called the son from the living room.

But the father had to talk to prove his existence.

Onto the father's head fell all the pain of the world: the cat that ate the kid, the dog that bit the cat, the stick that beat the dog, came fire, the chill of water, came slaughter, came the final butcher. And all because he had one kid, one only kid.

His son turned blank eyes on him. They were those of the eighty-year-old woman. His son was a German; his son was an Egyptian.

THE LAST issue of PAP was on the kitchen table. He had quoted Robert Coles again: "Sorrow may be fated, but to survive it and grow is an achievement all its own."

He and his wife held hands. They would do the Passover together and invite his parents. He had a couple of students at school who wanted to come. Even though they were not hungry, even though they were not needy, he would let them celebrate with him. He would be continuous and historical.

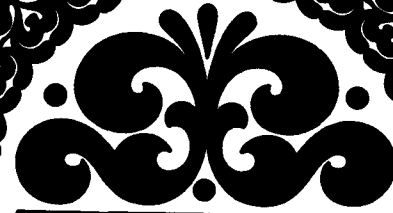
"If we do not reach our sons, we reach the sons of others," he whispered.

"It is not the same," whispered his wife.

Everything would be the same again, after the visitation. The metal pagoda would be gone. The stereo would be classical again. He would lift that arm on the record of his memory and play the old ways, his son bringing joy. Today, gifting them with sorrow, his son was still his son. Only sometimes he must be interrupted.

"It does not take an optimist to be hopeful," the father wrote, quoting Gunnar Myrdal who had come through town on a lecture tour. That would be the slogan for the next PAP newsletter. He and his sighing wife would be pessimists, seeing their son crouching inside of himself, making a smaller and smaller ball of his place in the world, a harder lump in their hearts. From that pejoration would come amelioration.

It was not very late in the day. The weather changed. Snow fell where the morning had been in the upper 40's. Last year's dried leaves were still falling from his blighted elm.

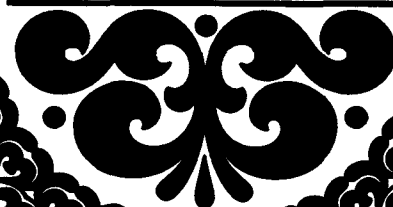


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In Search of Cecil Roth

Chaim Raphael

CECIL ROTH—a magic name in a certain realm of Jewish history writing—died on June 21, 1970 in Jerusalem, at the age of seventy-one. His first writing in what became his chosen field had appeared just about fifty years before, in 1920. Since that time, the work had poured from him—books, articles (including many in these pages), lectures, catalogues, not to mention judgments and controversies—in an apparently unending stream. To the world at large, two of his books, *A Short History of the Jewish People** and *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization*,† had made him the embodiment of general Jewish history writing. The audience was vast, for Jewish existence had in our time suddenly become a central issue. Who were the Jews? What was their *raison d'être*? Where did they fit into the social and cultural pattern of the Western world? These were the questions that forced themselves into public consciousness, from the early 1930's onward, with an urgency that had never existed before. At one end, the emerging crisis in Germany had burst history open, exposing a festering evil that so many had hoped never to hear of again. At another end, something strange and moving was happening in Palestine, uncertain as yet in its future for the Jewish people but already indicating reserves of strength and hope that might revolutionize the story with countervailing power. But even apart from this doubly driving interest,

the question of identity was calling for some authoritative definition among millions of people of Jewish descent in every country of the world, increasingly conscious, behind the façade of acculturation everywhere, of having somehow lost their bearings.

To the Orthodox in Jewish practice, an "explanation" of it all in secular historical terms was perhaps supererogatory. Jewish life was the story of "obedience" to God's "commands"; and if this is what Jewish history was all about, all the incidental events—the triumphs and tragedies—could be left to sort themselves out without an additional "pattern." The underlying faith was so overwhelming—so transcendent—that it dwarfed everything else. But for the majority of Jews, their links with Orthodoxy and their past were now so shaky that sentiment laced only with ignorance had become increasingly unsatisfying. Some easily assimilable account was needed, not only to answer criticisms and attacks from the outside, but to satisfy their own doubts and humiliations. Over the years many books were ultimately written to meet this need: some, when the authors found an original (or even gimmicky) approach, became immensely successful, far outselling the two books by Roth mentioned above. But even to the non-professional historian, there was an air about Roth's books which put them in a class apart. It was both their strength and weakness as popularizations that they were clearly a compression of vast detailed knowledge instead of being an imaginative blow-up of secondhand information, hand-tailored for an audience that

would respond most readily to a good splurge of emotion.

EVEN TO the supremely Orthodox, life for a Jew in the *galut* is always an attempt to strike a balance between the unbending tradition and conditions in the country of settlement. For a man like Roth, deeply responsive to the European culture around him, the secular world was far more than a veneer to Jewish life. Indeed, the central element in all his historical writing was that while, as a fervent Jew, he drew on and expressed the continuity of the generations—he had been molded to begin with by his father, a *maskil* (liberal scholar) by taste though a builders' merchant by occupation—his own attitude was heavily, almost excruciatingly, English. This is not said because he was, as it happened, immensely fruitful in the field of Anglo-Jewish history and wrote the classical *History of the Jews of England*.** It refers rather to his style as a human being and to the kind of subjects (outside the English field) that attracted his interest. On his "style," the many thousands who heard him lecture on his innumerable tours abroad must have wondered sometimes if they were looking at a renowned Jewish scholar or at a character from one of Evelyn Waugh's novels. His careless lock of hair, his lackadaisical elegance, his air of effortless superiority carried unmistakable overtones of the young men who would wander off to Europe in the 18th century on the Grand Tour, returning laden with antiques and other marvels from Italy and Greece; and of course it was no accident that his

* First edition, London, 1936 (Macmillan); in the U.S. the latest edition is published by Hartmore House, 494 pp., \$12.50.

† Published in London by Macmillan in 1938, and by Harper & Bros. in the U.S. in 1940.

** Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, 1964.

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most beloved area of interest was, in fact, Italy, and that he had amassed over time a quite unusual art collection reflecting this interest.

Here, then, is the first clue to understanding Roth's work in relation to ourselves. No one could have had a wider feeling about Jewish history as a whole, a more open mind to significant details culled from every land and period, a more intuitive approach to connections beneath the surface. Yet unmistakably he was not a Jew but an *English Jew*, as peculiar to his time and place as any of the Marrano grandees he wrote about or—and he seemed to love these best—the adventurous scalawags that Jewish history has constantly proliferated.

ONE CAN pinpoint this characteristic of Roth's even more precisely, as a prelude to understanding an imbroglio which blew up around him briefly toward the end of his life—farical in one sense but deeply significant in another. We are all aware through *Pygmalion* (or *My Fair Lady*) that every street in London has (or had) its own version of English, in terms of accent and vocabulary. The same was true in Roth's youth of the Judaism expressed by the different synagogues of London. His family lived in Dalston, a district which was at the time one of the first stages of bourgeois emancipation from the East End; they worshiped at one of the "United Synagogues"—the Jewish equivalent of the Church of England, where Judaism meant a love of tradition but with an open mind to everything else in the air around. Little more than a mile away—in Highbury—there was quite a different brand of bourgeois Judaism, expressing a Germano-Hungarian Jewish fundamentalism, under the redoubtable Rabbi Victor Schonfeld.

Everything in Roth's education bolstered the fine distinction expressed in this topographical datum. He attended the City of London School, favored at the time by rising (or even arrived) Jewish families (the future Lord Samuel went there). As a student

of general history at Oxford, he was already passionately interested in the Anglo-Jewish researches of men like Lucien Wolf and Joseph Jacobs, and was undoubtedly nursed along by Herbert Loewe, then Reader in Rabbinics—an Orthodox but liberally-minded scholar whose grandfather had been Orientalist to the Duke of Sussex and then secretary to Sir Moses Montefiore. One can see Roth's mind being forged, with its special attitude to Judaism; for if the mills of our Jewish God grind slowly, "with exactness grinds He all."

Certainly Roth was "a good Jew." In all his writings there was nothing but the greatest respect for the tradition. Meticulously observant (he refused to sit for his Oxford examinations on the Sabbath), he had tapped obscure rabbinic works for source material and documented the intercommunications of Jewish scholars through the ages as a living chain of the faith. Only one—apparently minute—point remained undefined: what was the first link in the chain, or rather to what was the chain fixed? The question never arose except, naturally enough, in the first chapter of his *Short History*, where he dealt with the Pentateuch stories of Jewish origins as a prolegomenon to where "real" history begins. Having presented the story in traditional terms, he then felt called on, as a modern man, to consider the very different account of the Patriarchs and Moses as presented by the "higher critics." Triumphantly he observed that their skepticism had suffered rude shocks in recent years, so that a Jew, while never able to determine what "really" happened in those pre-history days, can safely take refuge in the living force of the tradition as received. It was an attitude completely consistent with "Dalston" and by the same token immediately suspect to "Highbury."

No one would have bothered except that in 1964, having retired from Oxford at the age of sixty-five after fifteen years as Reader in Jewish Studies, Roth accepted a post of Professor of Jewish History at the rigidly Orthodox Bar-

Ilan University in Tel Aviv. Within a month of his arrival there, a certain Rabbi Bromberg, of the National Religious party, circulated a document quoting the first chapter of the *Short History* to prove that Roth was a heretic whose teaching at the University would corrupt the young. Roth had written:

It is said by some critics that not a shred of evidence for the historicity of Moses exists. That may be so if we are to regard potsherds as more significant and more reliable than the memory of people, or written records of immemorial antiquity. . . .

and he had gone on to argue that without a historical Moses it would be impossible to explain the distinctive existence of the Hebrew people in its tradition. Incredibly, Bromberg felt it ethical in his anti-Roth circular to stop the quotation at "That may be so." To their credit, the University authorities stood firmly behind Roth in the ensuing witch-hunt; but he had fallen ill and soon retired from his post. *Gam zu l'tovah* (all for the best). From then on, he was able to give much more time to his work as General Editor of the new *Encyclopedia Judaica* (due to appear in all its massive 15-volume glory in 1971), breaking off for lecturing spells in the United States. If the *Encyclopedia*, as we must surely believe, justifies its promise, it will be the crown of Roth's achievement, harnessing the fantastic discoveries and writings that have flooded the world of Jewish scholarship since the marvelous and beloved old *Jewish Encyclopedia* of 1901.

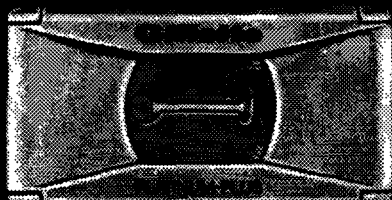
IF ROTH's theology might be shaky by fundamentalist standards, he was acceptable to the majority as a complete Jew because he was so outstandingly a man of dazzling knowledge—the supreme Jewish criterion; yet there is a sense in which, even without a heresy hunt to prove it, he was limited in his approach. He had been given a taste of the learning of Eastern Europe through his father and a local *melamed*, Moses Vilensky; it seems also that he had some training in rabbinic scholarship from



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Jacob Mann, then in London; but direct contact was lacking, and when he began to write he sprang fully armed with historical techniques from the world of Oxford rather than from the traditional womb of Talmud and Yeshiva. Roth's first work of scholarship was a learned book entitled *The Last Florentine Republic, 1527-30*, the fruit of his graduate research in Italian history. It is a young man's book, immensely romantic for the glories of Florence, in terms that Rabbi Bromberg might not have approved—"the Campanile, in its ethereal beauty . . . the whole surmounted as with a crown by the majestic cupola of the Duomo." The proud heroic defenders of the city hold out with rare daring against the Spanish invaders. When the city finally falls, it is as tragic (though he doesn't make the comparison) as the fall of Jerusalem. At this stage Roth was a "normal" historian: had he continued, he would no doubt have had a normal academic career. He never tired of telling how it was that he was diverted, almost by accident (or Providence?), into the specialized area he made so much his own.

One of these diversions occurred in Italy itself when, as so often happened later, some papers "fell into his hands," leading back in this case, through typical Roth detective work, to the documentation of the life and times of a hitherto obscure worthy of the 18th century—Rabbi Menahem Navarra of Verona. The more obscure, the more Roth loved to dig the person up. As he put it himself in opening this early essay (1925):

Jewish history . . . has tended to restrict its attention exclusively to the greater personalities. . . . Lesser characters have perforce been neglected and with them we have lost that intimate glimpse into the life of the ordinary men and women which is one of the most fascinating and certainly not the least important among the multitudinous branches of historical study.

What he could have added later was that studies of this kind—he published scores of them—repaid

themselves by a kind of geometric progression in furnishing innumerable reference cards for his endless jigsaw puzzle. It was out of this growing jigsaw that he created his unique and monumental knowledge of the Marrano families (his book *A History of the Marranos* was published as early as 1932). The subject overlapped, of course, with his two major works on *The Jews in Italy* (1946) and *The Jews in the Renaissance* (1959).

BUT A more entertaining diversion from general history had come even before Rabbi Menahem hove into sight. Roth, telling the story repeatedly, always allowed it to illustrate both his own acumen as a young prodigy (he never suffered from false modesty) and also how, for the first but not the last time, he was ultimately able to prove his theory against the built-in opposition of all "the experts." It was a favorite story with him, too, because its ramifications brought in an English king and a pretender to the throne: he always delighted in throwaway observations about how the Royal Family, the aristocracy, the Church, and many others believing themselves beyond range were in fact heavily involved in Jewish connections. And, finally, it was a favorite because the central Jewish character, far from being the good man of Jewish tales, was without doubt a scamp—or adventurer—who had the *chutzpah* of the devil and got away with it.

As Roth told it, the story began for him in 1920 when, as a history student at Oxford, he was "struck by the coincidence of name" between "Edward Brandon," a young Portuguese Jew who was an inmate of the *Domus Conversorum* (Converts' Home) in London from 1486 to 1472, and "Sir Edward Brampton," godson of the king (Edward IV), who held various commands under the Crown from 1472 onward, became governor of the island of Guernsey, and was somehow involved in the career of Perkin Warbeck, pretender to the English crown in 1497. Roth published a paper in 1922—his first on Anglo-Jewish history—ex-

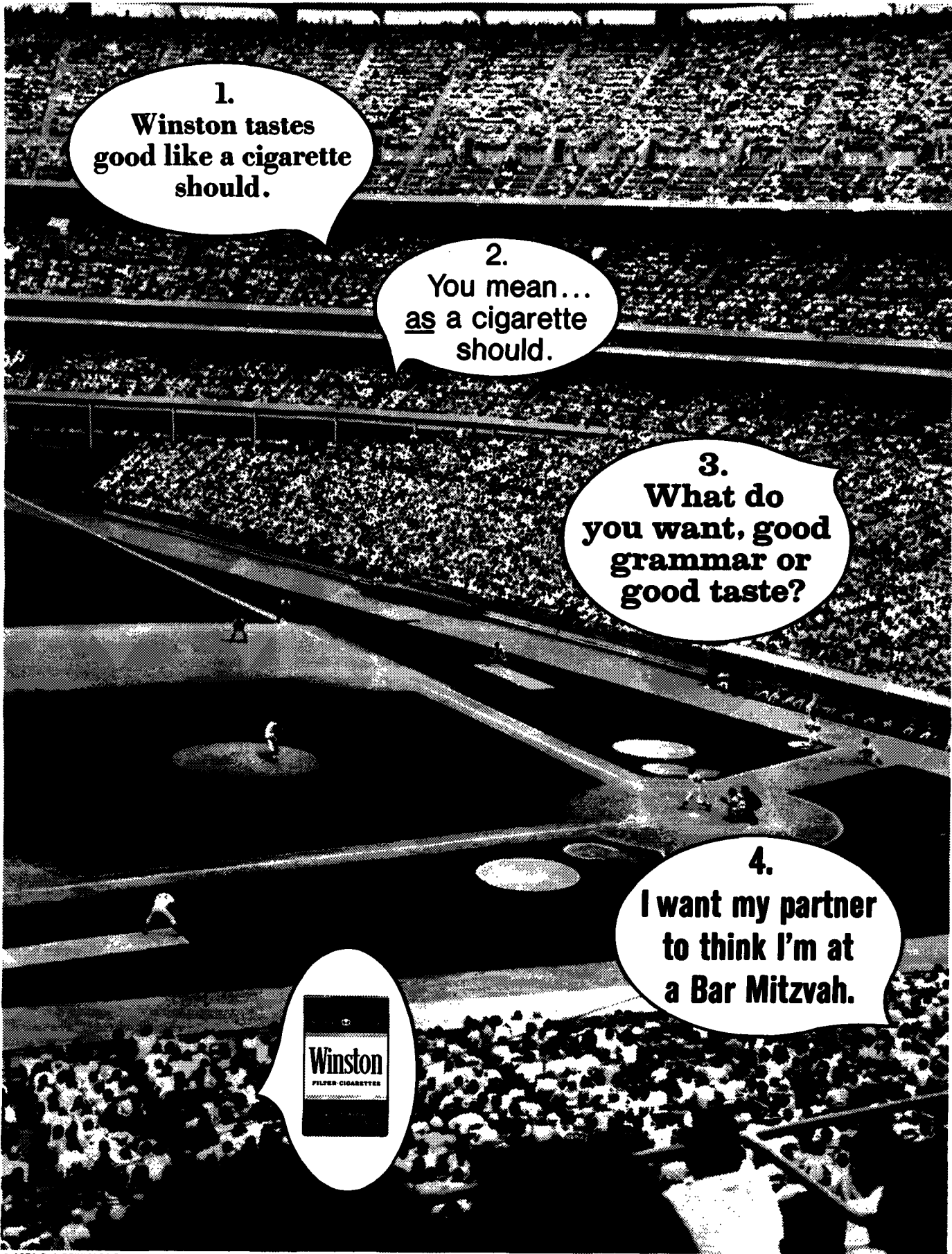
ploring the possibilities of this identity: but his ideas were received with skepticism by "the specialist historians."

Twenty-five years later, with a wealth of expertise now in his hands, new discoveries led him to Portuguese documents which establish beyond doubt that he had been right—and much more. The story now emerged that Brandon/Brampton, having started as a penniless Jewish boy from Portugal with the name (assumed) of Duarte Brandao, was welcomed back in 1470 by the King of Portugal, to whom he had in the meantime given many services, as "a gentleman of the household of the king of England," after which he turned up with one name or the other in England, the Low Countries, and Portugal, expanding his trading franchises, building up Perkin Warbeck with reminiscences of his supposed "father" Edward IV, but ultimately gravitating toward the establishment of an aristocratic base in Portugal, where he died and was entombed with all Christian honors and much flourishing of imaginary coats of arms.*

Ironically enough, the story had rumbled on through the documents because the descendants of Brandao, in an attempt to get rid of at least some of the taint of Jewish blood, had claimed that Duarte's mother had had him illegitimately through a Portuguese nobleman! It is a theme that comes out in reverse in another delightful essay by Roth, on the ancestry of Christopher Columbus.† In this case, Spanish historians, anxious to claim Columbus as of Spanish instead of Genoese origin, were forced to speculate that his family was of Spanish Jewish origin, and had found their way to Genoa in the 15th century as "New Christians" (i.e. Marranos). Roth, entering the fray with no particular desire to add Columbus to the list (there were

* Roth tells the story in *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History*, Jewish Publication Society, 1962, pp. 68-85: "Sir Edward Brampton, alias Duarte Brandao."

† "Who Was Columbus?" in *Personalities and Events in Jewish History*, Jewish Publication Society, 1961, pp. 192-211.



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plenty of other "Jewish contributions" to the voyage of the *Santa Maria*), finds himself nevertheless producing a host of ingenious "Jewish" explanations of otherwise mysterious elements in the Columbus story. But it is basically an essay in irony, or a flourish of technique. One can say the same of a discussion in another place of Shylock, drawing on socioeconomic factors to prove that he was not a Sephardi, as one might have expected, but an Ashkenazil. In all these essays, Roth's implicit approach seems to be: throughout history, a great many Jews, living quietly within their communities (as in 10th-century Cordova, 16th-century Rome, or 20th-century Dalston), have led decent, quiet, unremarkable lives, which is what the Jewish religion stands for; but at the same time, there has been a tremendous activity at the margin (or beyond) which slots into general history in a host of unpredictable, interesting, and often funny ways. The historian's first object is merely to document it all. Philosophies of history can be left to other people.

There is therefore very little moral fervor—phoney or otherwise—in Roth's work. Sometimes, it is true, he would launch into a violent attack—à la Savonarola—on the "low" standards of contemporary Jewish life in England. He saw the decencies he loved—loyalty to tradition, respect for scholarship—neglected or even despised, and it offended him. In the wider field, he responded along predictable lines to the outrages in Germany; when Mussolini joined in, it was like a personal blow, and he returned all the decorations he had received for his historical work on Italy. In his regular work, however, there is no sense of a grand theme, or even much "drawing of lessons." He would occasionally try to justify what might seem mere antiquarianism—such as his researches into the tiny field of Anglo-Jewish history—by claiming that it would end up by removing damaging ideas about Jews. It could now be established, for example, that the Jews of medieval England, far from being merely "urban usurers," were very widely

settled, with a host of "ordinary" occupations. One day, perhaps, it would be shown that they constituted "a large Anglo-Jewish proletariat"! But if he fell into this sometimes, he was more usually content to urge study *lishmah* (for its own sake). It was not the proletariat but the scholars whom he loved, as he showed in his masterly British Academy Paper: "The Intellectual Activities of Medieval English Jewry" (1949). It could be argued, of course, that in this paper he was not really exulting in the Jewish scholars whom he had tracked down but rather proving that his beloved England was not the intellectual backwater in medieval times that a (foreign?) scholar like Adolph Neubauer had claimed it to be.

IN WHAT must have been one of his last lectures in England—his ninth Presidential Address, in 1968, to the Jewish Historical Society—Roth has a delightfully disarming passage on his role:

When people speak of me as a Jewish historian, I know in my heart of hearts that I can speak without fear of contradiction only on the history of the handful of Jews in Oxford (never, I suppose, exceeding, if they approached, 200) between approximately 1150 and 1290. . . . [Yet] I cannot say that I can speak with confidence. I wish that I knew—really knew—the details of a single day in the life of a single one of the Jews in Oxford at this period of which I have written so volubly. In that case, I would know far more than I do about social history, legal history, religious history, constitutional history, administrative history. Indeed I would know quite a lot and would perhaps qualify for some of the encomia I have received. But alas, I do not.

He was (for once) being unduly modest. It was, in fact, precisely this kind of knowledge which he had shown to such effect in his chapter on the Jews in the *Cambridge Medieval History* and in his amplification (and illustration) of the classic *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* by Israel Abrahams. His knowledge was not merely that of the specialist, as he pre-

tended, but dipped into the most curious fields; and he would turn it on with equal readiness to produce quick books himself (as those on the Rothschilds, the Sassoons, and Disraeli) or to help inquiring students, with whom he was the most generous (and quizzical) of men. Yet he was true to himself in revealing how he loved the minutiae: and we, his readers, go there for the true joys of his work.

A single example can illustrate this. In his *Short History*, he allows himself five lines on the activities of the Jews in the Renaissance theater, especially in Mantua in the 16th century. In his *Jewish Contribution*, the story is spelled out with a little more detail, and he brings in by name the actor-producer Leone de'Somni Portaleone. But in *The Jews in the Renaissance*, the whole subject—and it is a fascinating one—comes completely alive, not only by his explaining the origins and character of Jewish theater in the detailed setting of Mantua, but in the full account he gives of de'Somni, a true Renaissance man, "the Max Reinhardt of his time" but so much more—a Hebrew scholar and poet who could share and intensify the broad culture into which he had been born. It is, of course, true that anything Italian seemed to add an extra dimension to Roth's writing and enthusiasm.

It is the enthusiasm that one remembers so well. Sometimes it would be impish—as when he would turn on a scholar whose work in general he revered (say, Neubauer or Joseph Jacobs) to demonstrate that something in what they had written was utterly wrong. Sometimes he would lead off with the same enthusiasm into a fight that he could hardly hope to win, as in his almost lone effort to prove on purely historical grounds—against the massed archeologists, epigraphers, and linguists—that the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls were not Essenes but Zealots.* But his warmest and

* See *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Historical Approach* (Norton); also, "A Solution to the Mystery of the Scrolls," COMMENTARY, October 1957, and "New Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls," June 1964.

most infectious enthusiasm arose out of his extraordinary talent as a collector—of books and manuscripts, drawings and paintings, regalia and bibelots. With his wife sharing these joys, their home radiated a quality all its own—a museum come to life.

EARLY IN LIFE Roth had ruled out the "lachrymose" conception of Jewish history. If one writes (he said in the Presidential Address mentioned above), "it is, frankly for the pleasure of the thing . . .

the pure detective work . . . the discovery of historical byways hitherto unexpected or unexplored, the revealing of unknown characters and personalities—heroes, scholars, saints, charlatans, adventurers, scoundrels." There are Jewish historians whose involvement carries with it a search for "theory"—even a sense of destiny. Roth could say, perhaps tongue in cheek, to explain why he ploughed this field: "I commend to the young in heart among you my ultimate answer: 'Because it is fun.'"

this way except insofar as he understands the passing nature of mortal love.

Now, in his forties, he has turned from the established to the new love. His devotions turn from the spiritual to the political, from the sympathies of the elders to those of the young. The swath of new affection cuts wide but not strangely. He has always admired youth from afar, even when he was twelve. He has come to understand that the Establishment elders are a tired force compared with the authority of the young whose esteem is new and fulfilling, and for good reason. All his life he has believed the redeeming power of belief, and the young have caught his afresh; all his life he has known that a man must serve that which wins his heart, or have no belief: a perilous condition. If his new affections lead him to the revolution culture, he is not ashamed; nor is he alone. He would always enjoy a fraternity other than that of his peers, he had learned early.

Some troubles of sensibility aside, his engagement with the counter-culture has its immediate pleasures. For from his clergyman's position now he has been able to enter quite close to the top of this large Establishment. Activism, he knows, has large holdings all over the land and a glittering hierarchy which has found room at the top for him.

His life as a cleric-rebel begins as he takes up the beloved assumption of the young that they, rather than their fathers, are candidates for salvation. He tolerates their fathers but has little truck with them, hoping for their sake that they will go away and not interfere. He has authority to cite. "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, the apostle writes."

Not surprisingly, then, he is described variously as elfin, athletic, spritelike, markedly younger looking than his years: for the attitude, the garb, and the face of the young uncannily suit him. (It was true too, once, of the clerical garb he donned; they belonged to each other as much.) He disports himself easily with the things which please them, leading poetry-reading services, jazz communions,

The Activist Cleric

Dorothy Rabinowitz

HIS COMPANIONS are young. His admirers are the youthful and the young in heart. It was not always so: a boy of sensitivity and intelligence, he had held to a shy belief that one might help people, and lead them, through love of God, to goodness. Very young, he was set apart thus by his intentions. He read much, dreamed alone, tried his hand at painting pictures, and took some teasing of a respectful kind. When his classmates courted each other in grade school, they told him he would perform their wedding services one day. It was that sort of thing they said to him, not much more, and, all good-humoredly, he did not mind their inattention. He had learned early that love of God and faith made him subject to a different kind of approbation from that accorded to those around him, and when he had forgotten many other things he would remember that. He understood that he would have to enjoy a fraternity other than that of his mates; and so expectantly he would see his own youth spent without the affection of his peers, though they paid him a decent respect.

More than any other boy he was wont to enjoy a courtship with

his elders as a consequence of his intelligence and his zeal. If other boys engaged, as in a rite of passage, in this oddly natural courtship between sensibility and authority, his was to be an affair of longer duration. Among the other things he learned as a boy, he learned that special devotion was recognized by reigning authority and never by one's peers. It was an incidental observation, a small thing beside the boy's full-hearted belief that one might lead people forward through darkness, to love of God, in whose service he enjoyed his own happiness.

He joined the clergy then, entering at the bottom of a large Establishment to enjoy many years of happiness in the service of his faith, and the reward authority bestows on special devotion. The bonds of the early courtship, far from outgrown, are present still and too much with him, as happens with long courtships. He entered the Establishment while yet in his teens. Some twenty years later, it would occur to him that it was oppressive.

Soon enough, the boy's belief is shrunk by the man's fatigue—the belief that in one's perfect and happy faith one might illumine the lives of others and lead them. After the scrutiny of his recent years, the religious Establishment more closely resembles dullness than happiness to him, and whither should he lead anyone? He does not know how he has come to feel

DOROTHY RABINOWITZ's "The Radicalized Professor" appeared in our June number. The present essay is the second in a series of portraits of familiar character types in contemporary American culture.

and building take-overs with the superior felicity which comes of enjoying things and doing good with them too.

There is nothing dolorous about the company he keeps. He has come to understand that frolicking in the service of religion is no vice: that it has the virtue of making religion pleasurable. He goes jovially now (he is implacably jovial; heartiness is his custom) from happenings to jazz communions, from Pentagon demonstrations to Freedom Seders, from one beautiful experience to another. He has decided that the beautiful experience is the impromptu, anytime. His fascination with the impromptu lies in his disbelief (born of years of unexciting devotions heard from the ignorant, the unimaginative, and the spiritually uninteresting) that the traditional utterance of prayer could ever be as heartfelt a spiritual act as that which erupts at a poetical or a political event, there, where many people have gathered for spontaneous feeling. He has this disbelief in common with the spiritual leaders of tent occasions in the revivalist belt.

Altogether, he has come to believe that any religious experience which takes place outside the halls of worship is just more *true* than that which takes place within. Partly as a consequence of that belief, he has come to see more than his share of them, perceiving religious experiences where another man might see a riot, or a building seized. In between experiences he continues to read, and to engage his own intellectual development to which he has always been devoted. A good part of his introspection now consists in a search for new means by which his religion might be transformed to relevance.

He can testify to his own warm renewals of religious feeling, whenever his services partake of the ritual and the language of contemporary culture. By the affirmation of mod followers and their songs, of jazz communion, and hip prayers, he suspects that religion might be rewarding to him again, once its Establishments were shaken and its elders vanquished, who have little left to

give anyone, and who remind him of a stale obedience. He cannot really rest until they, useless traducers of a true home for faith, are vanquished. There occurs, really, no other way to be free of them; he has never left their temples.

He hopes for felt religion again. The successful exchange of songs, chants, and rituals and beads with the with-it culture is more heartening that way than scriptures or meditation. Once he learned that the living God was carried in the heart alone, failing all other evidence of His presence. Now he makes his case from as many happenings as he can find in the culture. Most recently, he has taken to joining sensitivity-training classes in the belief that spiritual life causes severe dissociation. (He has always, himself, been capable of distinguishing between moral action and things of the spirit, for example: he knows that activism has little to do with action of the spirit.) On the other hand, his educated sensibility shrinks from the more startling forms of relevance practiced by some of his colleagues. Some of them run a Festival of Alternate Life Styles for the hippie community in California. While he "agrees with what they're trying to do," as the language of his culture has it, he is dismayed at their form; at their blue, red, and yellow psychedelic buses traveling to the site of their spiritual gathering place which they call "International Ideal City." Their slogan is, "Frankly, we're looking for people. Give Man a Chance." That is exactly the sort of sloganeering which puts him off as meaningless. For himself, he enjoys the full specificity of slogans like Right On! and Power to the People. And he is himself not averse to the thought of an ideal living community, albeit one more appropriately named. He has in mind a group residence for the like-minded called Communion Village, but it is still a place of the future; there is other work to be done now.

To his activist life he brings a certain style himself, the chief feature of which is a conspicuous passion. It is a passion expended on interpreting justice, doing justice,

and assaulting those who oppose his justice. Observers notice that the central features of this passion is its rigid, systematic caste. (To the elders, it is a familiar story. They have seen his obedience before.) Now, in his commitment to the revolutionary culture, his passion speaks not as the troubled opinion of man but as the assertion of divine authority which has chosen up political sides. His passion tells that the real God (the with-it God of rallies and happenings) opts for the destruction of our evil system, our government and our armies, much as the passion of the right-wing clergy tells that God is in the wings whispering imperatives for the destruction of world Communism.

In his passion he has developed a higher understanding of the law than any of his forerunners in the struggle for justice. Once admiring, he is now faintly scornful of Martin Luther King for a host of benighted attitudes: in particular his faithful nonviolence and his willingness to go to jail for civil disobedience. He has been helped in no small way in his new understanding; he has learned much from meetings and policy formulated by leading social critics of the culture; he disports himself with the works of Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman and the Panthers while his less passionate colleagues still toil behind an A. J. Muste whose life and works seem equally to have passed into dust. He understands that the important work of social action can best be performed by men free to pour blood on draft-board files, to invade churches and synagogues, to experiment with homemade napalm for demonstration purposes. In the interest of this social action he keeps himself free to move as he never could do in a jail: an understanding of priorities which Martin Luther King failed to grasp. He has authority for this belief. "All things are lawful," Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor has argued, for the destruction of a useless God.

He believes that, if religion has any uses left—and he sincerely believes that it does—they lie in the transfer of its symbols to the drama of protest. His political educators inform his belief, along with the

corollary that religion also owes money—though he is not entirely happy about black reparations. Still, if the choice is between making the passionate gesture and hesitating in order to make certain it is the right gesture, he knows he must do the first. He has developed a hatred of meditation. In general, if his faith has any meaning left it has to do with such passionate theaters of choice. His religion is relevant to the revolution culture, not contrariwise.

He is contemptuous these days (though he is not wholly comfortable with the feeling; true cynicism is no part of his nature). In particular he is contemptuous of men in positions of leadership who continue to serve the evil times while he is consumed in a passion of involvement. He sighs at ordinary people going about the business of their lives. About these he never had any illusions anyway. Years in the clergy made him know to what follies of faith and servitude they could be led. His heart is with those who never set foot in a church.

His friends and his public understand his scorn, as they understand that it is the unique strength of his soul which accounts for all his behavior and all his difficulties. They understand this easily because he has told them in no uncertain terms. Compassionate, but not trusting the herd with analogies (mens' ears have always been stone), he writes position papers stating the obvious parallel between *his* activity and that of certain men who braved the oppressor's whip and died for their passion, under Hitler and—the parallel is explicit—under Caesar.

In private, he remains a sensitive and selfless spiritual man, whose friends and public defend him staunchly against the charge of excess or grandiosity; for they understand, as he does, that a clergyman's political beliefs are no mere matter of opinion, his political gestures no ordinary act of conscience. Only desperate vanity could claim for private vision such passion as he displays. His friends know that he is himself humble, and exquisitely arrogant only in the service of God.

In general, the radical cleric has

preserved some altogether appealing beliefs: he believes that, if only religion were right it would not rest at serving God and man, but it would make people happy. Though he is as repelled by spiritual hucksterism as any sensitive man, he does believe that religion can be a joy commodity, advertised as the right trip. It must be the right trip, about that he is firm. From religion can come liberation, personal integration, happiness, self-knowledge, and plain joy, all right things. Love feelings, he knows, are good and they are fun. At his services, congregants experiment with touching hands and fingertips and offer other manifest expressions of the health induced by religion.

At some cost to his own altogether serious nature, he has undertaken to assert joy as a singular act of faith in making religion go. This leads him to assume a demeanor of continual merriment in the most extraordinary circumstances. If he has run afoul of the police in the course of his politico-religious activism and he is in jail, he records his pleasure that Providence placed him in such a fine place to do his work. He is certain that in these times, it is the only place for a brave man to be. If he has avoided jail, he records his happiness at being successfully on the lam: he is certain that in these times, it is the only place for a brave man to be.

Noting that the people grow anxious, society stirs in upheaval, universities totter, and war and poverty grow worse, he records his genuine hope for the future: it has never seemed brighter. The times are ripe for emancipation. He would have liked to lead men, always. In all his life neither his prayer nor fasting nor good deeds ever helped them: only the ceremony of dissolution promises an end to the systems which govern them both. As he awaits the troops gathering with him for the apocalypse, it occurs to him that he has never thought of yielding the robes of the clergy. It occurs to him now, dissident and brave, that he has traveled nowhere without a flock. In all his life, it has never occurred to him that one might ever have moved alone.

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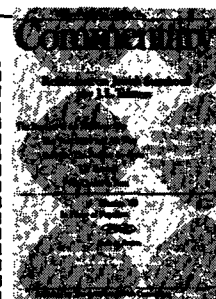
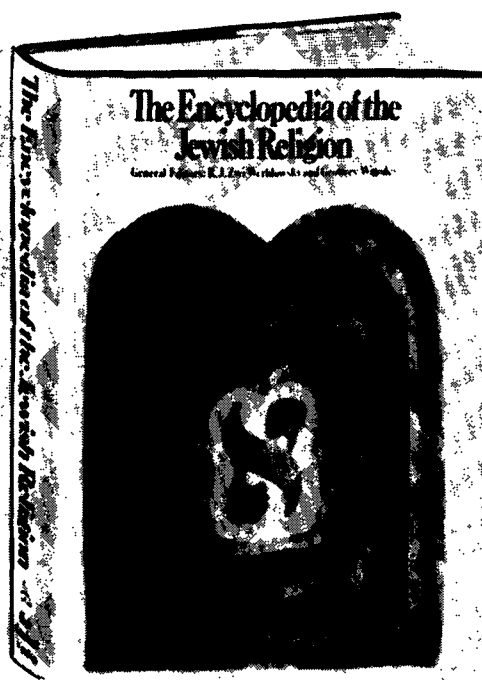
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Decline and Fall

THE END OF THE AMERICAN ERA.
By ANDREW HACKER. *Atheneum*.
264 pp. \$6.50.

Reviewed by MARCUS CUNLIFFE

ANDREW HACKER, a professor of government at Cornell and a regular contributor to these pages, is one of many people now concerned with what might be called the Condition-of-America Question. Since this book appeared he has, for instance, contributed to a *Newsweek* symposium (July 6, 1970) on the ills of contemporary America, together with Richard Hofstadter, Daniel J. Boorstin, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Eugene Genovese, and Staughton Lynd.

In some ways Hacker is more moderate or less angry-apocalyptic than the young men who refer to their country as "Amerika." Though he has a chapter on black protest entitled "Civil War," he does not seem to envisage pitched battles between the races, or any other catastrophic revolutionary scenario. In the *Newsweek* piece he says that he is unimpressed by historical grand theory on the scale of Spengler and Toynbee. He avoids the fashionable jargon of the "power structure" and the "military-industrial complex." Where others identify a sinisterly omnipresent "Establishment," and want to break centralized government down into smaller units, Hacker maintains that the central government has in truth too little effective authority, and would be still more abject if decentralized.

In other ways, however, Hacker is as pessimistic as could be—as pessimistic, indeed, as his title implies. For him the United States is in the grip of a disease which is fatal and which has reached a

terminal stage. According to his diagnosis, the process of decline dates from the closing months of World War II. In essence, Hacker believes, there has been a collapse of the national psyche. The sense of community, or at least the fact of social control, was hitherto provided by social deference, the Puritan work-ethic, patriotic fervor, and religious sentiment. These have been eroded away. The majority of Americans, Hacker claims, form a big, undifferentiated, prosperous yet amorphous and impuissant middle class. "The lambs," as Paul Goodman once said, "have grown sheepish." Their desire for self-fulfillment, in itself laudable, has become privatized, plaintive, greedy. Selfhood has slid into self-indulgence. Below this mass of outwardly successful, inwardly unhappy people is an angry underclass of "superfluous Americans," including blacks, shut out from, and perhaps not assimilable within, the dominant corporate economy. This minority shares the majority's belief that success is a natural right. So the underclass will no longer accept the role of underdog. But they are stuck with it. For public spirit—the readiness to conceive and carry through farsighted reform—is, in Hacker's view, quite dead: "America has become an ungovernable nation whose inhabitants refuse to regard themselves as citizens of a social order in which the authority of government plays a principal role." This being so, there is no point in even toying with the idea of a revitalized governmental and political system.

The nation's decay is apparently universal. Liberalism, the vaunted creed of generous Americanism, is now merely "a mode of expression for comfortably situated citizens who wish to appear progressive . . . without having to pay too high a price for their principles." As for radicalism, it lacks a program and its spokesmen—sheep in wolves' clothing?—are likely to disappear into middle-classdom as

soon as they settle into matrimony and a career. Neither of these enclaves is satisfactory. The career will entail the suffocations of work inside some large corporation. And the family possesses little virtue as an institution. The woman gets a particularly raw deal in marriage, and she and her husband are even less adequate as parents than as spouses. Their children, likewise infected with the virus of self-indulgence, will in future decades continue for good and for bad reasons to repudiate parental authority. Nor are the young, it seems, going to gain inspiration from their college years. For one thing, higher education has grown so rapidly that academe has had to fill out its departments with hyper-cautious mediocrities.

Finally, Hacker asserts, the United States has proved a hopeless failure in international affairs. Americans, so the argument goes, are fundamentally isolationist. They have little comprehension of, or sympathy with, other societies, and no sustaining belief in an American civilizing mission. Hacker predicts two broad possibilities for America overseas. There will either be a blind commitment to further adventures on the Vietnam pattern, perhaps culminating in a thermonuclear holocaust, or else a withdrawal from all commitments in the painful knowledge that "we are no longer capable of being a great power." Either way, "America's history as a nation has reached its end."

I AM British, the citizen of a country whose own "era" might seem to have ended with a thump. I am also a historian. On both counts, critiques of America like Hacker's strike me as dubious—as narrowly self-regarding. To a European they represent a sort of negative conceit, an inversion of old-style American chauvinism. The former tendency was to regard the United States as a "unique" civilization—that is, uniquely favored. The present

MARCUS CUNLIFFE, professor of American Studies at the University of Sussex, reviewed Dean Acheson's *Present at the Creation* in our May number.

tendency is to cling to the notion of uniqueness, but with the contrary insistence that among the nations the United States is uniquely unstable, depraved, beset. Thus, I question whether the United States was ever as nationally coherent in previous epochs as Hacker suggests. At periods of crisis such as the Civil War there was an outcry of woe, in a vocabulary closely resembling that of Hacker: America has been ruined, and by democracy; it is all self, self, and the Union nowhere.

I am made uneasy too by his apparent supposition that national feeling is good per se, and that without nationalism a society goes to pieces. But the spirit of the nation-state may be odious—*vide* Nazi Germany. It is conceivable that the decline of nationalist emotion in the United States (if this has gone as far as Hacker thinks, which I doubt) is a mark of enlightenment instead of decay. Some nations, like Poland, have in the past physically disappeared through conquest and partition. That fate seems not to threaten America, however internally disunited the country may appear. So it makes no sense, strictly, to speak of America as coming to an end. What Hacker seems to mean is that the United States is no longer *the* top-dog nation, and that this easy supremacy lasted for only a quarter of a century. But by all the usual indices, including economic vitality as well as wealth, the United States is still very much *a* top-dog nation; whatever the shortcomings of the corporate structure, the rest of the world has no doubt that *le défi Américain* remains formidable.

In fact the history of other nations which have enjoyed a period of military and/or commercial prominence seems instructive. Military defeat by no means finished them off. Frequently they have prospered, as Britain did after the humiliation of the American Revolutionary War, or Germany and Japan after 1945, or France after apparently catastrophic reverses in Algeria and Indochina during the 1950's. The recent development of West Germany and Japan, among other instances, indicates that while trade may follow the flag,

it can do extremely well without a flag to follow. One may answer that these countries revived because, in comparison with the United States, they were old, close-knit societies. But historically there have been deep cleavages within most of the principal nations. Among the relatively affluent peoples of the contemporary world there is arguably less division of feeling in the United States than in, say, France or Germany or Italy or Canada or Belgium. Though the "have" nations face acute problems, it is hard to believe that their inner weaknesses are anything like as serious as, say, those of India or Turkey or most of the nations of Latin America.

Such qualifications and consolations drawn from history are, naturally enough, dismissed by the harsher critics of contemporary America, whether radical or merely glum. To admit their relevance, to accept, for example, that the United States of 1860 may have been in worse shape than the United States of 1970, is to emasculate one's own arguments. I agree that historical "lessons" are ambiguous affairs, and that the assumption that everything has already happened somewhere or other fails to take account of the effects of social and technological change—or rather of the *rate* of change. It is possible, that while nearly all of America's current ailments have been in existence for a long time, they have never before revealed themselves in such an ominous, *total* conjunction. In the words of an American friend of mine, "For a hundred years and more we have swept our problems under the carpet. There comes a time when no more dirt can be packed into the hiding place. We have reached that point in America."

CERTAINLY it would be foolish to take a rosy view of the American situation. A great deal is wrong. Indeed, Professor Hacker could have strengthened his own rather selective and idiosyncratic case by dealing with the weaknesses of the American economy as a whole, instead of confining himself to a discussion of the corporate psychology. One can neither prove nor

disprove the relevance of analogies with other eras and other societies. Ultimately what matters is how contemporary Americans feel. If enough of them share the belief that all their roads are dead ends, then the country is in deep trouble. In his understandable dismay and exasperation, Hacker is clearly disinclined to reassure his fellow Americans that they are the greatest: they have believed that message too long, and now need to be told some home truths. But pessimism of the paralyzing God-Help-America sort is as harmful and as excessive as complacency of the God-Bless-America sort. A good example of the negative conceit I mentioned earlier is Hacker's complaint that the United States took forty-six months to win World War II (no mention of allies). Why, he asks, "did the United States not rout its enemies in a year and a half or, at most, two years?" His explanation is that the nation insisted on maintaining its usual level of civilian comfort and therefore failed to mobilize its military resources with the proper zeal. But anyone who believes that the task could have been accomplished in two years or less is hard to take seriously as a commentator on the 20th-century world. Such a demand strikes me as belonging rather to the fantasy realm of Superman comic books.

As a European, I still believe that Andrew Hacker and other American pundits see their difficulties too narrowly and too masochistically. A more useful perspective would involve grouping the United States with the several "Western" nations that share basically the same problems, internally and in relation to the rest of the world (though they are inclined to let America take the blame, especially in the Third World). Each has to work out its own specific problems, which in a way are of course "unique" to it. But all the problems, internal and external, while differing in scale and texture, are of the same related order. In this respect, one might say that there never was a "British era" and there never has been an American one. To the extent that either nation was conspicuously richer and more pow-

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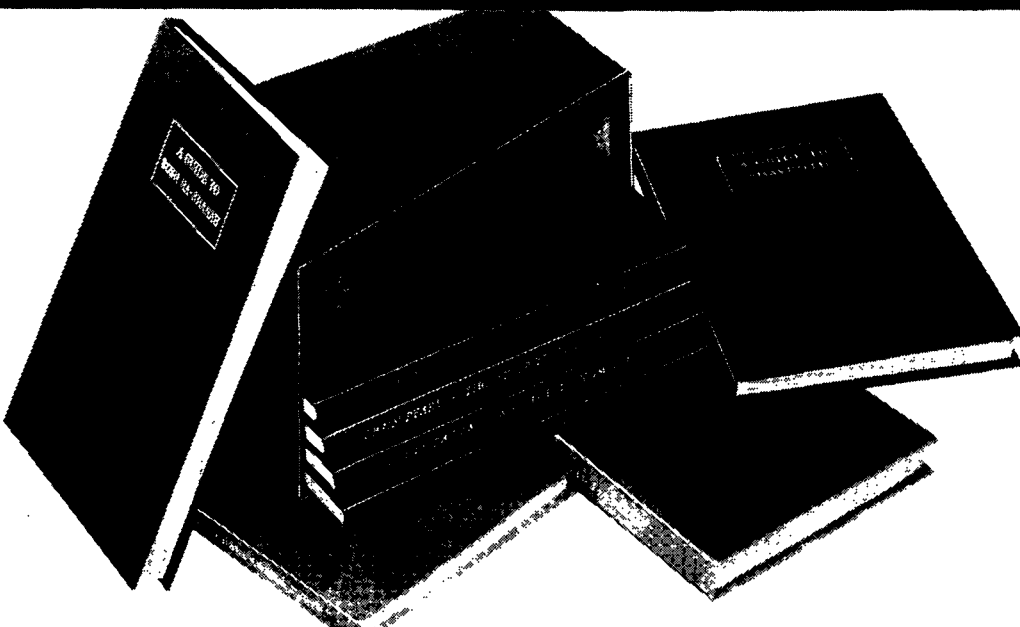
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erful than other nations, its *relative* decline is probably advantageous to the world as a whole. Future prospects, for the United States and for the West generally, are somewhat forbidding, but no darker than often in the past, and a great deal brighter than for the hundreds of millions of the wretched of the earth in other continents. What we need is to be alarmed enough to face our collective responsibilities, but not to be scared out of our wits.

The Besht

IN PRAISE OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV [Shivhei ha-Besht]. THE EARLIEST COLLECTION OF LEGENDS ABOUT THE FOUNDER OF HASIDISM. Translated and edited by DAN BEN-AMOS and JEROME R. MINTZ. *Indiana University Press*. 352 pp. \$17.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR A. COHEN

WE KNOW almost nothing about Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, whose teachings and preachments form the core of Hasidism, the movement that served to revivify the spirituality of Central and Eastern European Jewry two centuries ago and that has had a decisive influence on the piety and religious pedagogy of the Jewish people ever since. The life of Israel ben Eliezer is, in effect, the legend of the Baal Shem Tov. (Baal Shem Tov, commonly abbreviated to BeShT, is the title by which Rabbi Israel was called. Literally, "Master of the Good Name," it was an honorific bestowed upon wonder-working rabbis of the time.) There are accepted dates of birth and death (1700-1760), conventional agreement upon his family origin, his orphaned youth, his years as a teacher of the young and secret prodigy, his self-revelation, his ministry in the Pale, and his ultimate settlement in the Ukrainian

town of Medzhibozh; but beyond scant facts all is legend.

In *Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*—the Hebrew collection of tales about the Master, first published in Poland in 1814 and now made available, for the first time in its entirety, in English translation*—underscores the complexity of coping with this remarkable religious personality. Clearly the Baal Shem Tov himself did not help matters. When people asked him direct questions, he responded by telling stories about himself; he narrated history in the guise of tales; he made his own biography into a basis of instruction; his habits, his manner of speech, and his behavior became the surety of his teaching. The living man, Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, disappeared behind the emblem of his work.

Not alone a teacher or sage, an interpreter of the law, or a leader of his people, the Baal Shem Tov was also an adept of the secret names of God, the knowledge of which enabled him to perform wonders. He is thus clearly a figure out of theurgic Kabbalism. His great power, however much its immediacy might ultimately depend upon the quality of his works and its posterity upon the relevance of his *exempla*, was in the first instance founded upon the fact that he could put the mysteries of the Kabbalah to work for himself, the community at hand, and the whole of Israel. Of the 251 tales identified and separated by Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome Mintz, more than half deal with the working of wonders, whether in the form of straightforward prophecy and prevision, the location and exorcism of demons, the working of miraculous cures, the guaranteeing of offspring to the infertile, or the punishment of adulterers, Jew-haters, and other malefactors.

THE TALES have a strength that derives from the power of the Baal Shem Tov's *persona*. Indeed,

few of the tales—I would except such examples as "Jonah" and "The Language of the Animals," where the mystery is in the meaning and not in the narration of an act—have independent force. As the translators observe, the typical tale begins with the propounding of a conundrum or a difficulty (the petition of a barren woman, the imminence of a blood libel or other individual or collective calamity), followed by an appeal to a doctor or to a lesser sage who fails to resolve the matter, and finally a call to the Besht who does what the hour demands. The tale usually ends with the redactor, Rabbi Dov Ber, the son-in-law of Rabbi Alexander the Shohet (who had been the Besht's scribe for eight years), emphasizing his own mystification or stressing the tale's authenticity by recalling the unimpeachability of its source.

THE LANGUAGE of the tales is never as fluent and gracious as in the renditions of them offered in Martin Buber's well-known *The Legend of the Baal Shem* (translated by Maurice Friedman, Harper, 1955). Nor are the tales, either in the original or in the uncompromising Ben-Amos-Mintz translation, striated with those meta-psychological presuppositions that Buber employed. One of the best known of the tales, for example, in which the fourteen-year-old Besht receives secret Kabbalistic manuscripts from the son of Rabbi Adam, is, in the original version, unencumbered with the elaborations and psychological supports found in Buber's retelling. At the conclusion of the tale, Rabbi Adam's son importunes the Besht to attempt to summon for a second time the Prince of Torah (the supernal master of the esoteric and exoteric Torah); but, failing to remain awake as the Besht had cautioned him, the rabbi's son is slain by Satan. The original narrative concludes: "Before the morning light, Rabbi Adam's son could not restrain himself and he dozed a little. When the Besht saw this he ran to him quickly and made a loud noise, but Rabbi Adam's son suddenly fainted. They tried to awaken him but it was no use.

ARTHUR A. COHEN is the editor of a recent collection, *Arguments and Doctrines*, and has written an introductory essay for the forthcoming volume of *photographs, A People Apart: Hasidic Life in America*.

* An indispensable companion work to the present volume is *Legends of the Hasidim: An Introduction to Hasidic Culture & Oral Tradition in the New World* (University of Chicago Press, 1968, \$12.50), by Jerome R. Mintz, co-translator and co-editor of the collection under review.

They buried him with great honor." Buber's version, in contrast to this dry account, is overblown: "Toward morning the rabbi lost the power of resistance, and he leaned his head against the wall. The boy sought to arouse him, but the rabbi's already stiffening arm raised itself, and a stammer of black blasphemy broke forth from his mouth. Then the flame stabbed him in the heart, and he sank to the ground."

Unless Buber was drawing here on other versions of the tale (a possible explanation, but we should bear in mind Gershom Scholem's criticism of Buber for his indifference to the proper citation of sources*), what he has done is to condense the original narrative, conflate the two attempts to summon the Prince of Torah into one, merge the Prince of Fire who threatens the first attempt with the Satan of the second, and ascribe to the poor son of Rabbi Adam a demonic possession where none is indicated by the text. Buber's version is surely lush and more dramatic, but it is no longer a folk legend; it has been turned into a legend rendered by art, with all the invention and imagination appropriate to art.

The power of the original tale, however, resides in the fact that the causality of the universe, the intimacies of heaven and earth, the courts of God and the conventicles of men, are seen as self-evident, palpable, in no need of psychological interpretation. The tale of Rabbi Adam's son and the dangerous manuscripts is a warning against *hubris* in the employment of the mysteries. It requires embellishment only if one does not believe in the Kabbalah, in the mysteries, in the gnosis of the adept, in the possibilities of theurgic manipulation. That may have been a problem for Buber; it may be a problem for us; but it certainly wasn't a problem for the contemporaries of the Baal Shem Tov.

It is no surprise, given the testimony of the legends, that the Baal

* See "Martin Buber's Hasidism," COMMENTARY, October 1961.

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Shem Tov left no works attributed to his authorship. His immediate disciples, Jacob Joseph of Polnoye, the Maggid of Mezritch, and others, collected his dicta and gave them the structure of a teaching, but even they did not regard the Besht's pronouncements as a systematic, theoretical body of received truth. During the period from 1770 to 1815, when the great Zadikim set down their considerations on prayer, their commentaries on Scripture, doctrine was always admixed with tales of their own lives and stories about the life of their master, the Besht. Later, beginning in 1815, when *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov* had become available, a whole literature of hagiography came into being: popular collections of tales, legends, fantasies, incorporating the wondrous deeds and sayings of the earlier generation of the founders of Hasidism.

Legend 159 of the present collection recounts that on a certain occasion a man wrote down the Besht's teaching. One day the Besht saw a demon carrying a book and asked: "What is the book that you hold in your hand?" When informed that it was a book he himself had composed, the Besht summoned his followers and inquired who had committed his teaching to writing. The guilty author admitted his deed and brought the work to the Besht, who examined it and said: "There is not even a single word here that is mine."

Something crucial to the understanding of the Baal Shem Tov is suggested by this story. The Besht was a master at reading signs and interpreting higher intentions, a worker of wonders, and, as Leontiev said of the Russian saints, so superior that there was nothing ordinary or simply "worthy" in his personality. The Baal Shem Tov was also frequently cruel and unyielding, arrogant and sarcastic, but only if judged by modern standards of decency and worthiness, qualities not called for by the age in which he lived. The stories in *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov* make clear that the times were those of grinding poverty, depredation and blood libel, massacre by maraud-

ing Ukrainians and Tartars—not a period for conventional leadership. The Baal Shem Tov was not just a leader of his community, but—in the distinction developed by Max Scheler in "Model and Leader"—a charismatic figure who became the bearer of trans-historical meaning.

True leaders, including those of the charismatic variety, must be present, immediate, visible; their leadership, discriminated from that of both hereditary leaders (Queen Elizabeth II) and designated leaders (President Nixon), is charismatic because its power flows from the ontological interior. Moreover, charisma is non-transferable; it is desperately precarious, all historical. Who could be Napoleon after Napoleon (surely not Louis Napoleon), or the next Lenin (not Stalin), or another Che Guevara (neither Eldridge Cleaver nor Huey Newton)? The alternative to the fragility of historical charisma is the transformation of history into legend, the obscuring of hard fact, the suppression of the brute and rude, and the elevation of the fantastical. Freed from his times and context, the leader becomes a model, with transitivity, endurance, futurity.*

It is no wonder that in the posterity of the Baal Shem Tov there should be communities of Hasidim who regard Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev, who died in 1809, as their active spiritual leader, or that Lubavitcher Hasidim still speak of the words and deeds of Shneur Zalman of Ladi as though he were their contemporary. For the follower, the master is never dead, his words are never set down and written, his life is never closed. He endures not as leader but as model, as the emblem and seal of life.

* One must of course distinguish among different kinds of models: the Baal Shem Tov is surely not like Che Guevara. The former derived his power and authority from the fact that God was always with him, whereas the latter rested everything upon the working of the autonomous will. The former is an example of pneumatic leadership (like the prophets, like the Buddha, like Jesus of Nazareth, like Francis of Assisi); the latter was a charismatic leader who has become a revolutionary model.

Inside City Hall

LINDSAY'S PROMISE: THE DREAM THAT FAILED. By WOODY KLEIN
Macmillan. 349 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by JEROME ZUKOSKY

JOHN V. LINDSAY, perhaps more than any other figure in public life, has made of the "urban crisis" a platform upon which to build his career. The rhetoric of his first mayoralty campaign, it will be recalled, portrayed a New York on the brink of collapse, salvageable only by a thoroughgoing revolution in ideas, men, and policies. The rhetoric, inflated even then, has not subsided. Indeed, Lindsay's lamentations have increased in scope to encompass the nation as a whole, as witness his speech last April at Berkeley, where he told the students that all of American society is "sick" and in the grip of an institutional malaise against whose most visible symbols—big corporations, "the military," decaying political parties "unresponsive to the needs of the people"—Lindsay has sworn implacable battle. Those unnamed and mysterious "power brokers," for example, to whom New York was said to be in thrall in those first days of 1966, have now become the "quiet men in business suits" who frequent and inhabit the White House; Lindsay, according to his pronouncements, is but awaiting the proper opportunity to take them on, and to rescue that larger urban area called the nation.

The rhetoric endears Lindsay to many people and may explain why he is often seen—and sees himself—as the voice of the beleaguered and the conscience of the disenfranchised. But the enunciation of Correct Principles and Higher Truths is insufficient for a practitioner of democratic politics and the manager of a large municipal enterprise. Chief executives, to be successful, require an ability to negotiate and compro-

JEROME ZUKOSKY, a new contributor, has written on public affairs for a number of journals. At present he is working on a book on state and local government.

mise. Rather than regarding "the city" as an amorphous entity whose aspirations and feelings he embodies in some mystical way, a mayor worth his salt must perceive, among the various conflicting groups and interests, those who have power and those who don't and mediate among them, a task demanding infinite patience and a sure sense of where power is to be found in society and how it manifests itself.

Recently in these pages,* Roger Starr commented on the defects of Lindsay's approach to solving problems, and included enough evidence of the breakdown of municipal services to indicate that despite the best of intentions, despite "innovative" programs and the importation of "creative" young people to City Hall, New York can hardly be said to have been saved and might more accurately be said to be going downhill faster than ever. Giving Lindsay the benefit of the doubt, one could, of course, ascribe his failures not to personal shortcomings but to the faults of "the system"—the enormity of the job, the niggardliness of the state legislature, imperfections in the federal system, lack of proper "national priorities," and so forth. But that, to judge from Woody Klein's *Lindsay's Promise: The Dream That Failed*, would simply be an evasion. For Klein draws a picture of such acute and disastrous deficiency at the everyday tasks of municipal government that one is left with the overwhelming impression that should the federal and state treasuries be emptied tomorrow into New York City's coffers, Lindsay would not know what to do with the money, or, what is worse, have around him the men capable of telling him what to do. There may indeed be a crisis gripping New York, but Klein's account leads one to wonder whether its source lies, as alleged, in the hearts and minds of men and their institutions, or in a more easily located place: inside City Hall.

That a new political order began in New York on January 1, 1966, is the "dream" of this book's

* "John V. Lindsay: A Political Portrait," February 1970.



The 1970s' new black problems were the 1770s' new black problems

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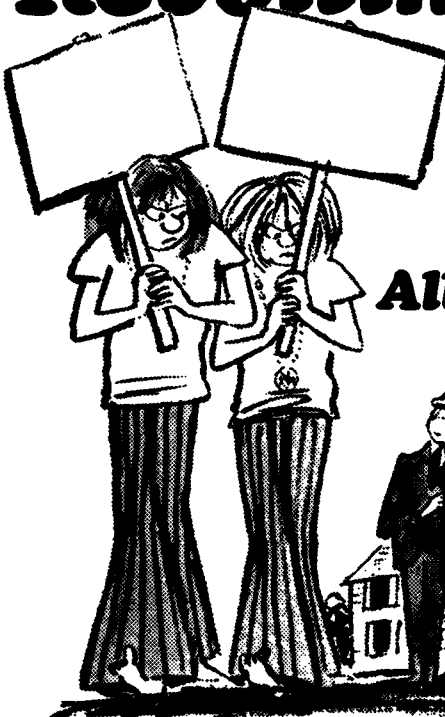
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title. Klein, a newspaper reporter, had offered his services to Lindsay in 1965, was hired late that year to manage press relations at campaign headquarters, and then became the mayor's official public-relations officer. (He had achieved some distinction as a crusading writer on slums, exposing the fact that they are unpleasant places in which to live and exceedingly difficult to eradicate.) Like many others who joined the Lindsay retinue, Klein believed that helping a man with the right notions and feelings about urban evils was the way to achieve "a slumless city," and as such a high and noble calling. Although he calls himself—and Lindsay—an idealist, "moralist" might be a better description. Indeed, the bulk of the book chronicles the quick disillusion of two moralists in public life. "Power, I found, was a difficult commodity to be burdened with unless you knew exactly what to do with it," Klein observes, and he makes plain that both to himself and to Lindsay it was an enormous burden to carry.

During his tenure in the Lindsay administration, Klein discovered that dreams and inspirations are less suitable foundations upon which to rebuild a city than is the capacity to move men and money, to promote capital investment, and to energize bureaucracies. That capacity was in short supply in the new administration. Disillusioned from the beginning, "exhausted" after three weeks, convinced after eleven months that life at City Hall was a "nightmare," Klein became a housing administrator. In less than two years, he tells us, he became "totally discontented and disillusioned" in that job too. We are given only a sparse record of this latter period but a sweeping judgment: the slums did not go away, nor did the administration seem capable of making any constructive effort in that direction. The "housing crisis" had become worse.

The picture of naiveté Klein draws of himself is a remarkable one but nonetheless useful in understanding, among other things, why so many men have quit the Lindsay circle. Klein discovered—he tells us this after eleven pre-

vious years as a reporter—that newspapers printed "trivia." He discovered that mayors and men of power are surrounded by self-seeking aides who would trample each other like ants to impress the boss. He also discovered that favor-seekers are more plentiful than loyal and intelligent public servants. "I did not meet many men of real courage and conviction in politics," he sums up ruefully. One can only regret that his education in the facts of political life was not obtained at smaller expense to himself and to the public.

As for Lindsay, with whom Klein worked closely if not effectively, the portrait of the public man that emerges is hardly a flattering one. To begin with, Lindsay appears to suffer from continuous fits of pique. He cannot conduct daily business without getting angry, petulant, furious, frustrated, shaken, snappish, nervous, baffled, confused, exhausted, dispirited—the adjectives are all Klein's—after dealing with some person or some group. At the slightest sign of conflict, the most innocuous incident turns into a full-fledged confrontation. For example, early in his administration Lindsay lunched with the management of the *Daily News*, which, then as now, did not view him kindly. The *News* executives questioned the mayor rather sharply and the luncheon concluded in a burst of ill-feeling, with Lindsay leaving in a huff and on his return to City Hall, cancelling his subscription to the paper.

All this, to be sure, may be familiar to newspaper readers, but Klein has expanded the journalistic run-through to provide a stream of anecdotes, often in the form of direct quotations, of the kind that reporters cannot capture. The picture he paints is not a pretty one, and men loyal to the mayor have called it distorted and colored by the fact that Klein was politely but firmly fired as press secretary, a matter that he treats with apparent candor. I am inclined to trust Klein's account, however. For all its depiction of the warts of the public man, it presents John Lindsay as a compassionate and attractive human

being, and in both respects it accords with my own observations. But more important, the particulars—Klein refrains from much analysis or speculation—fit very neatly with Lindsay's own rhetoric and sense of himself. Lindsay, as described in this book, is a man utterly baffled by, and anxious to escape, the demands of democratic politics; it is remarkable, for example, how often we find Lindsay literally running away—from newsmen, labor leaders, Birchites, small-town mayors ("reactionary bastards," he called them after accepting their good wishes and handshakes), and a long list of people and groups he does not like or who he feels do not like him. One can easily understand why Lindsay wishes to escape to that ethereal realm in which Ideas and Principles are transcendent, and conflict dissolves in the light of Truth, Reason, and Justice, dispensed by men gifted in perceiving such things. In such celestial cities, The Mayor is treated with the respect and devotion that real mayors must live without, and the absence of which, Klein relates, Lindsay complains about bitterly.

Klein's book also helps one to understand why it is that, despite his failure as manager and politician, Lindsay can so easily identify with and obtain the sympathy of those who feel disaffected and powerless, as well as those members of smaller societies we call children. Men of real power, whether politicians, financiers, or parents, rarely indulge in chest-thumping, preferring rather to exercise the power they have, aware of its dangers and limits and the high art required to manage it. John Lindsay talks about power a great deal. He does so, I suspect, because it is the one necessary commodity he does not have, the one above all he wants, and the one, this book tells us, he does not know how to find. His behavior resembles that of a petulant child, angry at being in a game he does not know how to play well and whose rules he cannot divine. One must be charitable, of course, for the game has not yet ended and there is hope that given time and luck Lindsay will figure it out and become a better player. There are

many inclined to believe that he will; Woody Klein is one of them. I would hope, however, that there are others who will add up the bill for John V. Lindsay's civic education and determine what it has cost those who have been asked to pay for it. The final accounting should make for a fascinating document.

The Moviegoer

GOING STEADY. By PAULINE KAEI.
Atlantic Monthly Press. 304 pp.
\$6.95.

Reviewed by JOSEPH EPSTEIN

BETWEEN PEOPLE who go to the movies and real moviegoers there is a distinction akin to that between people who take a drink every now and then and alcoholics. And as alcoholics are not noted for consulting oenologists, most moviegoers have little use for film criticism. Let a film critic instruct someone who merely goes to the movies that a film like *Madigan*, with Richard Widmark and Henry Fonda, is just another piece of vulgar Hollywood trash about chasing a mad killer around the streets of New York, and perhaps he can deter that person from going to see it. He cannot hope to put off the real moviegoer, however—as soon tell the man in the alley with his pint bottle in a paper bag that what he is about to swallow was produced in a bad year.

Pauline Kael is a moviegoer, as were James Agee and Robert Warshaw—before Miss Kael, the only two really special American writers on the subject of the movies. Although Miss Kael is as different from these two men as they were different from each other, like them she begins with an unshakable love for the movies. She knows, as did Agee and Warshaw, that when you walk into a movie theater you are not walking into the Louvre or the Old Vic—though you might, on rare occasion, find echoes of both. “Movies,” writes Miss Kael, quickly cutting through yards and yards of

cinéaste silliness, “are so rarely great art, that if we cannot appreciate great trash, we have very little reason to be interested in them.”

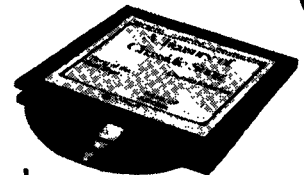
Precisely because of lines like that, Pauline Kael may not be the movie critic's movie critic, but she is indisputably the moviegoer's. Which is not to say that she is a connoisseur of *aesthétique du schlock*—though to an extent every moviegoer is—but instead that she has a better sense of what movies can do, what they are about, and why we go to them than anyone else now writing about movies in America. Her range of appreciation is wide—she is, for example, excellent on Jean-Luc Godard but can also find things to enjoy in such a movie as *The Thomas Crown Affair*—and the reason for this is that she has learned to calibrate the various pleasures offered by different kinds of movies. Unlike the old-line highbrow film critics, she feels no urgent need to stamp out any movie that falls short of Goethe when he was writing well; and unlike the swing-

ing younger critics, she makes no attempt to elevate simple trash, or even good trash, into high art. “We ought,” she remarks, “to be able to see a reasonably lousy picture without feeling we've been violated.”

MOVIES have now officially become the art of the young, or at least the one art above all others that young people are said to be most interested in. Do the young read Pauline Kael? I do not know for a fact that they do not, but there is good reason to doubt that they do. I don't believe she tells them anything they want to hear. Certainly she does not in any sense truckle to them; and in one of the pieces in *Going Steady* she remarks on how “so many people are beginning to treat ‘youth’ as the ultimate judge—as a collective Tolstoyan clean old peasant.” That remark, far from being simply anti-youth, says something rather important about a great many movies being produced today. To put it in the strictest of marketing terms: as any savvy film-

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JOSEPH EPSTEIN's article, "Coming of Age in Chicago," appeared in our December 1969 number.

maker knows, make it with youth and you've got it made. Consequently, many films are now aimed solely at a youth audience, the (probably) valid assumption being that older people, terrified lest they be thought out of it, will pay to see any movie youth approves. And the best formula for appealing to a youth audience, as to any other large segment of a mass audience, is to create a movie that reinforces all its values without challenging a single one of them. How else explain the success of movies like *If . . .* or Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*? In her review of the latter, Miss Kael, who notes that it is "a bit ugly to see Shakespeare used for being with-it," offers as good an explanation as any for its success when she writes: "This could be a makeout movie for teenagers the way *A Man and a Woman* was for college students."

Not only is this an apt explanation for the success of a particular movie, but it also illustrates one among the scores of different reasons people have for going to the movies—and the overwhelming majority of these reasons have nothing whatever to do with art. People go to movies to turn on or to turn off; to look at people more beautiful than themselves wearing better clothes than they wear; to pick up pointers on how to decorate their homes or make love; to be titillated, aroused, or terrified; or sometimes to find out what everyone else is so titillated, aroused, or terrified about. "Probably," Miss Kael writes, "everything that can be done in movies can be done some other way, but—and this is what's so miraculous and so expedient about them—they can do almost anything any other art can do (alone or in combination) and they can take on some of the functions of exploration, of journalism, of anthropology, of almost any branch of knowledge as well." Another way of saying this is to say that a movie really has to be rotten to be a complete washout. There is almost always something one can take away with him: a few good lines, an interesting face, a good scene, a shot or two of an unusual cityscape. Between a bad book and a bad movie there is no

real choice; in fact, one will go to see a movie made from a book one would never dream of reading.

No one knows more about the incidental charms of the movies than Pauline Kael, and no one is less likely to mistake them for art. She never forgets that while all art is entertainment, not all entertainment is art. There is nothing very deep about this distinction, but it is refreshing to find it operating in movie criticism, a field in which one more commonly finds someone of wide education and very little intelligence smashing away at a fragile little nothing of a Jack Lemmon movie as if it were a forged Leonardo, only to reappear in print a few weeks later holding up some zircon necklace of a movie like *Petulia* or *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* as true art.

ALTHOUGH far and away the best thing in *Going Steady* is Miss Kael's long essay, "Trash, Art, and the Movies," the remarkable flexibility of her approach to the movies is perhaps best seen in a review of fewer than three pages of a film entitled *The Two of Us*. She begins her review by saying that this is the kind of simple, decent, unaffected movie that the late James Agee would have loved. As for herself, she wishes she liked it better than she does, "because not liking such an unspoiled film lays one open to the charge of not being good enough, not being pure in heart." She demonstrates why Agee would have loved the movie, and then remarks: "but a movie that, to use Agee's language, is tender and full of 'reverence for reality' and all can still seem pretty thin, and there's so little going on in *The Two of Us* that one has to begin thinking of it as an idyll-fable, which is not my idea of a good time." She then goes on to spot what for her are the flaws in the movie, and ends by telling us of its best moments. After describing the movie's best scene, she appends the following coda to the review:

That, I think, is the one moment of great artistry in the movie. . . . This is quite a lot to get from a movie, but I don't think that in order to take this away with us

we should have to pretend about the quality of the rest. There's no point in overvaluing one's lost innocence, artistically speaking. Once it's lost, it's lost. Pretending it isn't is sentimentality.

It is, I think, exactly this kind of modulated, carefully selective criticism that the movies most require. For it is not the enjoyment of the intellectually indefensible pleasures of the movies—pleasures, in fact, that require no defense—that threatens to trivialize art, but the pumping up on the part of critics of false masterpieces. One of Pauline Kael's special virtues is that she makes us realize how difficult the achievement of true art, the real thing, is in the movies. Everyone knows about the corrosive role of commercial considerations in movie production. The hybrid nature of movies as an art form, the fact that they are essentially collaborative, requiring so many different hands in their creation, makes it sometimes seem a small miracle that movies emerge with any unified quality whatsoever. What is not so well known, and what Miss Kael points out, is that the most common apprenticeship served by movie directors these days is working in television, and the most common apprenticeship for television is directing television commercials. A training program of this kind ought to keep the movies, or at least American movies, out of what the estimable Frank Sinatra once called "the Mona Lisa, or art, business" for years.

Despite all the attention being lavished upon them, and all the money being spent to produce and promote them, the movies' status as art is still somewhat dubious. Among the things one has to distrust is all the concern for and talk about "technique" in the movies. Miss Kael, although she doesn't deny that technique can contribute to the pleasure of a movie, nevertheless sees it as a secondary matter. "One doesn't," she writes, "want to talk about how Tolstoy got his effects but about the work itself." (The analogy with Tolstoy isn't as unfair as it sounds; movie critics compare directors with major literary artists all the time.) And when we come to view movies whole, as artistic en-

terprises attempting to make statements about life, they are all too frequently not merely disappointing but ridiculous. Of the mod movie *Joanna*, a film that takes itself with the utmost seriousness, Miss Kael writes: "Mod filmmakers, it appears, have just discovered the Rubaiyat and are working their way toward *The Razor's Edge*." In one of several small but worthwhile insights in *Going Steady* Miss Kael points out that really first-rate literature doesn't translate to the screen, though second-, third-, or fourth-rate literature does: Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, B. Traven's *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, and so forth.

Pauline Kael can strike off such insights because, coming out of a literary culture herself, she has a surer sense of what one is entitled to expect from a work that advertises itself as art. In writing about the movies, she has not found, as so many other movie critics seem to have, a subject she can consistently be superior to; nor does she apparently feel any need to stake out a claim for the supremacy of the movies as the "now" art and thereby inflate her own critical self-importance. Pauline Kael's criticism combines a love for the movies with an absolute unwillingness to be conned by them. It is this that makes her America's best movie critic. To paraphrase Warner Oland playing a villainous Oriental chieftain in a 30's movie, "Do what you like with the rest of the movie critics, but this white woman stays with me."

Paying for the Good Life

TECHNOLOGY AND GROWTH: THE PRICE WE PAY. By E. J. MISHAN. *Praeger*. 193 pp. \$7.95.

21 POPULAR ECONOMIC FALLACIES. By E. J. MISHAN. *Praeger*. 245 pp. \$7.95.

Reviewed by LAWRENCE MALKIN

FROM THOMAS MORE to Bertrand Russell, England has bequeathed to the world more

than its share of utopian cranks. In England people accept this eccentric strain of intellectual brilliance and superior morality with dignity and tolerance; a stable and well-formed society can afford such luxuries of the spirit. I am not sure this is true of our society, with so much of its work unfinished, and sadly one must say this applies to the transatlantic crossing of Professor E. J. Mishan, at least if he is to be taken as seriously as he demands. Mishan has gained a widening reputation in the United States in tandem with the rise of the environment movement, of which he was an early economic prophet. He spends half the year at the London School of Economics and half at American University in Washington, D.C., where he has been invited to teach by a faculty group of economic radicals whose ebullient if imprecise questioning of the production-oriented and maldistributive economic machine would do credit to the waning radical traditions of the LSE itself.

The last time I heard Mishan at American University, at a convention of radical economists, he was being taxed on how his application of the pricing system to the social costs of public amenity differed from that of Milton Friedman, under whom Mishan got his doctorate at the University of Chicago. Mishan replied that putting the true price on social costs such as traffic congestion would allow people more of a choice than they now have, at least until such time as governments got around to making more positive choices for them on behalf of society. Perhaps his willingness to settle for the first step of pricing, coupled with a millenarian expectation that the second step will surely follow, accounts for the acceptance of his work by business economists he deplores. His work is occasionally published in British banking magazines, and the *Wall Street Journal* recently gave his excellent but British-oriented polemic, *21 Popular Economic Fallacies*, a patronizing review, praising its contribution to "constructive debate" on economic problems.

It is indeed refreshing to have in the lists an economist who can

fulminate against his colleagues' insane concentration on aggregate economic growth and wind up with an iconoclastic declaration of the private car as "one of the great disasters to have befallen the human race." Other economists have begun to catch up. Earlier this year none other than the conservative panjandrum Arthur Burns told a Congressional committee that he would like to see calculations of a "net national product," subtracting the damage done by growth and the rundown of equipment from the gross calculations. Some university economists are already at work trying to devise such a measure, and members of a Republican administration, no less, have evinced cautious interest. Perhaps Mishan's *cri de coeur* has been helpful while a few embattled planners have been trying to figure out how to organize the necessary transition from private cars back to public buses and trains, but I doubt it. For in the interim, Mishan would really be happier if more people (and I shall explain later just which people they are) would go back to walking. Unfortunately, this simple expedient is just not on the horizon, and that is exactly what is wrong with the hairshirt overtones in the hue and cry about the Environment.

Mishan's main quarrel with modern economics is the other economists. He rightly accuses them of a preoccupation with growth for its own sake, of a "growthmania" fixation on index numbers that show an unqualified gross national product. "The main purpose of this essay," he writes in *Technology and Growth*, "is to uncover the kinds of choices that face us, or any modern community, and to make it apparent that the so-called policy of economic growth as popularly understood is hardly more than a policy of drifting quickly—of snatching at any technological innovation that proves marketable with scant respect for its social consequences." Not unexpectedly, he rejects the postwar choice of aggregate growth according to the gospel of Keynes: a philosopher's stone which economists revealed to their political masters as the discovery that the way to solve social problems

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was to get rich quick. That this has had only limited social value is evident from the excesses of growth during the past decade in the United States. Mishan would solve the welfare problem, which growth theorists have tried to solve by using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, by more selective application of welfare payments to the poor. So far so good, leaving aside the problem of where to find the political courage and dexterity to make this application.

Mishan's analysis continues by borrowing Alfred Marshall's idea of the "spillover effect" that new firms have on old ones when they enter an industry. He broadens it to include the unmeasured spillover effect of industries on society itself—the smoke, the noise, the use of clean water and air which up to now have always been considered free goods, and no longer can be so considered. Classical economics sees the production of goods for consumption as welfare; Mishan warns that this process promotes "ill-fare." It is again refreshing to hear an economist say that the good life is not necessarily the life of goods; in fact, some of these goods can be, as Mishan puts it, positive "bads." This said (as Galbraith has, some time ago), what else? Economics is still the applied science of greed. It will not do to wish away the greed and change the science.

MISHAN PROPOSES that governments legislate "amenity rights" for people robbed of peace and quiet; the polluters of peace and quiet would pay. He writes: "One has but to imagine a country in which men were invested by law with property rights in privacy, quiet, and clean air—simple things, but for many indispensable to the enjoyment of the good life—to recognize that the extent of compensatory payments [for loss of amenity rights] that would perforce accompany the operation of industries, of motorized traffic and airlines, would constrain them to close down—or else to operate at levels far below those which would prevail in the absence of such legislation, until such time as industry and transport discovered inexpensive ways of controlling

their own noxious by-products." The problem remains: what to do until then?

Mishan's solutions, while radical, are as socially divisive as the "ill-fare" he rightly condemns: a system of separate facilities. For those fed up with cars, he would set up towns "admitting only horses and horsedrawn vehicles as means of transport." Those who wanted to drive elsewhere would have to "pay to the full all social costs," including the costs of insulating themselves and their exhaust from the rest of society. To deal with his other *bête noire*, the airplane, he would prefer to ban all international air travel: "With more leisurely travel restored—and enforced by prohibiting speeds in excess of, say, 30 knots—one could confidently anticipate an enormous reduction in the demand for foreign travel." Just in case this let-them-eat-cake proposal doesn't go down, Mishan is willing to settle for a ban on air travel "to a wide selection of mountain lakes and coastal resorts and islands scattered around the globe; and within and around them abolish all motorized traffic. Areas should be set aside for the true lover of natural beauty who is prepared to make his pilgrimage by boat and willing to explore islands, valleys, and bays and woodlands on foot or by horse-drawn vehicles."

IT DOES NOT take an economist, and I am not one, to calculate the sole criterion that would determine who gets into the separate and select areas, and who stays out. It is called the pricing system. The rich would flock to the residential enclaves served by horses (after parking their Rolls-Royces around the edge at conveniently situated parking lots—unless, of course, they had commuted to the city by first-class train). The isolated woodlands would be populated by vacationing dons (Professor Mishan among them) spending the leisure of the long vac. on walking tours among the unspoiled peasants. Your reviewer, meanwhile, would be doing his damndest to get on the committee which selected those favored mountain and coastal resorts. I happen to own a cottage in just such an area,

on a mountainous Mediterranean coast, and would dearly love to keep out the *hoi polloi* and push the local peasantry back a century or so. But, alas, it may be too late. Until recently this tiny village had no electricity and was connected to town by a winding road. Professor Mishan would no doubt cancel his walking tour upon discovering that as soon as the high-tension lines had crossed the mountains, everyone promptly installed lights and bought electric refrigerators. It was horrible. The local women were actually able to keep their meat from spoiling and enjoy iced drinks, and the café installed a ghastly espresso machine. Just last year the road was widened to facilitate the passage of tourist buses crammed with vulgar rubberneckers from the more accessible resorts, where they come for two-week package tours and a spot of sunshine. Not perhaps a vacation to my taste or his, but very much to theirs and little enough reward for a year's work.

PROFESSOR MISHAN has made a startling discovery: that spreading the wealth, however imperfectly, can be a mixed blessing to society and—more to the point—a disaster to those who got theirs first. But it is too late for Luddites to cry stop-the-world-I-want-to-get-off, especially when the poor and the black have not had their chance to get on, and the working class is in danger of being pushed off again by inflation. Mishan blames the phenomenon of rising prices largely on the rising aspirations of the people and those dastardly governments which try to satisfy them. He would go back to the simple life: "Those old-fashioned enough to believe that the chief sources of gratification are to be found in intimate personal relationships and the sense of belonging to a community cannot view the advance of an all-embracing technology without misgivings." Marx could have told him this a century ago; the distribution of wealth and the allocation of resources are still the main economic problems of society, not just the preservation of rural amenities for the middle class.

Postwar Europe has done a better job of this than we have for a number of reasons, most of which can be subsumed under the heading of cultural choice. The Europeans have a more stable and hierarchic culture to preserve. The physical evidence of it lies around them in their cities and towns, the spiritual evidence in the way they have finally learned to treat each other after the horrors of what can only be described as this century's tribal wars. Our own culture cannot build up the underpinnings of two thousand years in two hundred. A society still so close to the frontier (in myth if not in fact) is bound to be excessively oriented toward personal consumption for survival rather than investment in public amenity. Europe built up its stock of amenity by a process of the magnificent rich soaking the miserable poor, and I doubt that even Professor Mishan would recommend we duplicate this process, even if it were politically possible. Someone will have to pay to undo the environmental rape of the past and lay the public foundations for the future, and it will not come by just crying halt. It will have to come out of economic growth, albeit reduced and redirected by education, leadership, and consent, if democracy means anything at all. The real pollution in this country does not come from automobile exhausts and factory chimneys, although they are bad enough. They are merely the signature of a selfish pollution of the spirit that says: get ahead and stay there at the expense of others. It is no accident, indeed it is clear cause and effect, that the gemlike flame of the environment movement burns most brightly among the young suffering from a surfeit of affluence; they've had it all, and they know it's not worth it. But environmentalists would do well to remember, as they quite rightly do their own thing, that they do not own the countryside, let alone the country. Elitist arrogance will harm us all; simple economics teaches that people do not give up what little they have unless they get something tangible in return.

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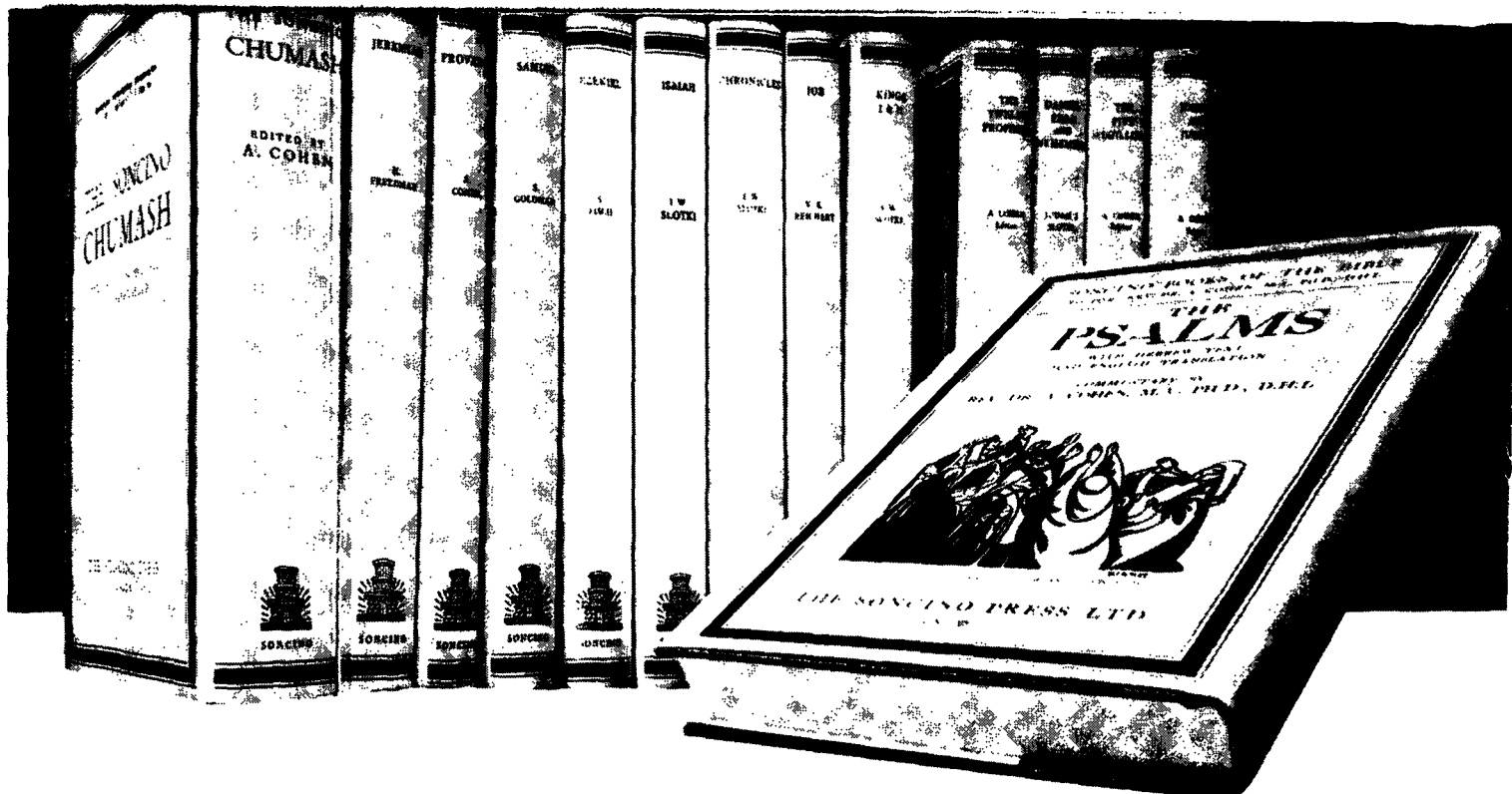
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